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ABSTRACT

The articles in this collection address basic questions about college reading theory, curriculum, and assessment. Major article titles and authors are as follows: (1) "Reading Achievement," by Anthony R. Petrosky; (2) "Excerpt from 'A Proposal for Reading Stages'," by Jeanne S. Chall; (3) "Finding a Sense of Wonder in Language and Literacy," by Roger W. Shuy; (4) "On Roger Shuy, Linguistics, and College Reading," by Martha J. Bell; (5) "Reading: Theory and Practice at CUNY," by Phyllis Cash; (6) "The Case for Themes in a College Reading Course," by Ira Epstein and Ernest Nieratka; (7) "My Response," by Morton L. Fuhr; (8) "Study Psych! A Series of Learning Skills Workshops for Students in an Introductory Psychology Course," by Beth Pacheco; (9) "Critical Thinking: How I Found the Missing Link," by Frank E. Brown; and (10) "What Does the Test Test?" by Ellen Block. (FL)

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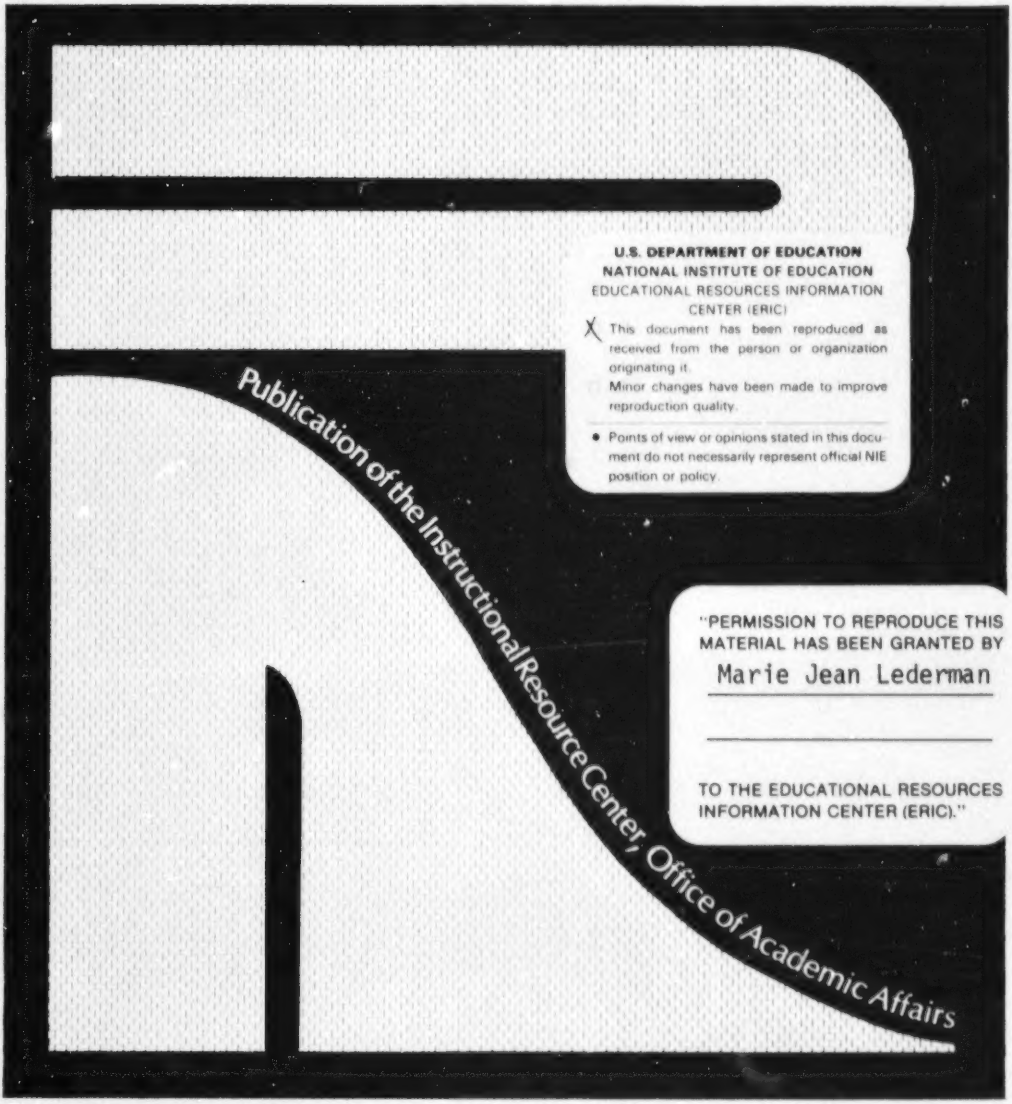
College Reading: Responses to the CUNY Reading Seminars

Fall, 1983



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CUNY READING SEMINARS

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June 15, 1982	Roger W. Shuy Center for Applied Linguistics Georgetown University
June 16, 1982	Lila Soll Department of Compensatory Programs The Bernard M. Baruch College

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College Reading: Responses to the CUNY Reading Seminars

A Special Issue of Resource

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COLLEGE READING: RESPONSES TO THE CUNY READING SEMINARS

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Preface

Since its inception in 1974, CUNY's Instructional Resource Center has acted as a catalyst for bringing together basic skills faculty from all of the colleges in the University to work together and share their educational theories, achievements, and concerns. This special issue of Resource is the outcome of a series of seminars, hosted by the Center on four days in June, 1982 in which reading coordinators and reading faculty from each of the seventeen undergraduate colleges and members of the Center's staff participated. The purpose of the seminar series was to address basic questions about theory, curriculum, and assessment of college reading which would be applicable to CUNY. Each of the first three seminars was led by a nationally-recognized educator in the fields of reading and linguistics: Professor Jeanne S. Chall, from the Graduate School of Education of Harvard University; Professor Anthony R. Petrosky from the University of Pittsburgh, and Professor Roger W. Shuy from Georgetown University.

The series was originally suggested by Lila Soll, a member of the Compensatory Programs Department at Baruch College and co-author of Basic Skills Programs at The City University of New York: Reading. Her survey of the reading programs at the University and discussions with reading faculty at each college made her aware of the need of CUNY reading faculty and administrators to come together to talk about theory, curriculum, instruction, and assessment in their field and try to discover the trends in research and instruction in teaching reading to underprepared college students elsewhere in the country.

Prior to the seminars, each leader was sent background material on the reading programs at the University as well as A College Reading Curriculum Model, a document drafted by a Consultant Committee of the Chancellor's Task Force on Reading of the Freshman Skills Assessment Program. At the same time, each consultant sent key articles for the participants to read in advance of the seminars; a list of these articles and monographs appears in the bibliography. In each of the first three seminars, an invited leader spoke from his or her own and a national perspective, then led a discussion to clarify the talk and to relate it to the CUNY experience. In the fourth session, led by Lila Soll, CUNY participants reviewed and assessed the issues raised in terms of directions for CUNY reading programs.

As a discipline, the teaching of reading to underprepared readers in college is relatively new. While most of us took courses in writing and mathematics in college--and therefore understand something about what is being taught in basic writing and basic mathematics courses--we did not take developmental reading courses. Therefore, it is important for administrators and faculty who teach in other disciplines to understand something of the theoretical background, curricular concerns, and instructional strategies involved in the teaching of college reading. We must all know more about a discipline which is vital to helping students gain the skills they need to survive in college. In particular, we must understand that "reading" has many meanings: the young child learning to

read familiar texts; the elementary school pupil reading to learn information from a text; the junior high school student reading to grasp concepts from a text; and finally, the mature college student acquiring the wide variety of strategies that will enable him or her to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate the range of college-level reading materials. These distinctions are often lost on those outside of the reading field.

This publication grew out of the discussions held and the concerns raised by the speakers and the thirty-one participants in the seminars. The seminar leaders contributed materials, and some of the participants have responded by writing brief articles from their vantage point as CUNY reading faculty. While much more research is needed in the field of college reading, the seminars raised important questions and began to define the territory of that research.

Marie Jean Lederman
University Dean, Academic Affairs
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THE CUNY READING SEMINARS: QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

Lila Soll

Baruch College

We asked four questions in our letters of invitation to Professors Anthony R. Petrosky, Jeanne S. Chall and Roger W. Shuy--questions which outlined some of the basic issues we hoped to explore with them as leaders of the CUNY Reading Seminars. Although these questions offer no easy answers, our three distinguished seminar leaders offered suggestions from their own research and experience. The discussions stimulated by their responses were spirited and thought-provoking. These were the questions we asked:

1. What does research tell us about the reading processes of underprepared college students, and in what kinds of research should CUNY reading educators be engaged?

2. How can we realistically assess underprepared college students' progress in reading given the constraints of limited time and few acceptable standardized measures?

3. How can teachers utilize the life experiences of underprepared college students in order to expand their frames of reference so that they can succeed in an academic environment?

4. What aspects of the reading and writing process should be taught and/or assessed separately or together?

The first question poses a particularly difficult challenge because most of us are aware that until recently the emphasis in research has been on beginning reading and decoding skills. Neither the demands of college reading nor the assessment of the range of reading abilities essential for success in college has been systematically explored. Hypothetical models of the comprehension process designed by linguistic and reading theoreticians need to be validated by the classroom experience of people like the CUNY reading educators.

One such developmental model offered by Chall consists of five stages of reading growth beginning with Stage 1 which she calls "Initial Reading or Decoding Stage" to Stage 5, "A World View--College" (see pages 17-22). Chall referred to her stage theory as a metaphor, to clarify research data and classroom experience. She emphasized that "the successive stages means that readers do different things in relation to printed matter at each successive stage, although the term reading is commonly used for all the stages."[1]

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[1] Jeanne S. Chall, Stages of Reading Development (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1983), p. 12.

Petrosky, from his vantage point as co-author of Reading, Thinking and Writing, a report of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), informed us that the 1979-80 assessment of reading and literature revealed that although most 17-year old students can read a variety of materials, "they develop very few skills for examining the nature of the ideas they take away from their reading."[2] In addition to reviewing the National Assessment of Reading research, Petrosky reviewed other evaluations of reading tests, concluding by saying there are no good multiple-choice tests of reading.

The need for more specific research questions to confirm general theory was dealt with by sociolinguist Roger Shuy. He focused on the significance of context as "it is related to the belief and attitudes of the participants in a communication event."[3] In addition, Shuy stressed the progression of language development from the "intimate" through the "casual," "consultative (school)" and "formal" functions.

If, as Chall hypothesized, the successive stages follow a hierarchical progression which are characterized "by growth in the ability to read language that is more complex, less frequently encountered, more technical and more abstract" as well as "by the extent to which prior knowledge is needed to read and understand materials,"[4] surely we at CUNY must begin to analyze the materials and tasks required of college freshmen through careful research designs.

In my experience, the vast majority of students entering CUNY reading programs have gone through the earliest stages of Chall's schema. However, the later stages, which demand prior knowledge and an ability to deal with a variety of facts and concepts, are those stages which underprepared students at CUNY have failed to master. Therefore, they have difficulty in dealing with the challenges of college reading. Research on the college reading process has just begun to address the appropriate questions and focus on the needs of underprepared college students. CUNY reading teachers need to refine the research questions and to provide the laboratories for testing the hypotheses and verifying the data.

The second question, "How can we assess underprepared college students' progress?" was addressed by all the seminar leaders. Petrosky began the seminar series with some strong opinions, supported by research, about standardized multiple-choice testing. He felt the emphasis on multiple-choice assessment tests has had a negative effect on curriculum: questions teachers ask in class and the tasks they assign in the classrooms. He advocated constructing tests that require students to write about what they read by using a taxonomy that focuses on recall, comparison, classification, inference and evaluation tasks. This method of

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[2] A. Applebee, et al., Reading, Thinking, and Writing: Results from the 1979-80 National Assessment of Reading and Literature (Denver: The National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1981), p. 2.

[3] Roger W. Shuy, "Pragmatics: Still Another Contribution To Reading," Sixth Western Symposium in Learning, Bellingham, Washington, 1975, p. 4.

[4] Chall, p. 12.

evaluation would have a constructive influence on curriculum development, and he recommended such an approach for CUNY. Chall was far less critical of standardized multiple-choice reading tests than Petrosky, and she admonished us to choose one test and get to know it well. Chall also challenged us to develop our own test, if we were not satisfied with existing instruments. Shuy also was critical of standardized multiple-choice tests and said he preferred ongoing classroom assessment.

Judging from the number of questions and the amount of discussion on the topic of assessment, I believe that there is a need to develop methods of assessing students' progress which is separate from screening and certifying students. In fact, many units of CUNY and individual teachers have developed their own tools for diagnosis and additional assessment of progress which should be shared with their colleagues.

Several seminar participants volunteered to serve on a Consultant Committee which has since been appointed by the Chancellor's Task Force on Reading of The Freshman Skills Assessment Program to collect and disseminate additional evaluative procedures in order to provide a more complete picture of students' reading abilities.

The third question, "How can teachers utilize the life experiences of underprepared students in order to expand their frames of reference so that they can succeed in an academic environment?" received the least attention from the seminar leaders. Nevertheless, Shuy's sociolinguistic approach emphasizing "context" and the way "good language learners begin with a function, a need to get something done with language and move gradually toward acquiring the forms which reveal that function"[5] should provide clues for research and curriculum development, especially for the large cadre of ESL students entering CUNY.

In answer to the last question, "What aspects of the reading and writing process should be taught and/or assessed separately or together?" Petrosky advocated integrating reading and writing instruction and assessment. Shuy also raised questions about the separation of writing and reading. Both emphasized the importance of a holistic linguistic environment for teaching language skills. Chall said that the literature suggests that reading skills and writing skills enhance one another, and their relationship in the classroom needs further investigation.

Many of the CUNY reading teachers have developed strategies and structures to provide a holistic linguistic environment, especially through "theme-centered" courses. But can we demonstrate that this approach is, in fact, more efficient for college learners than the remedial basic skills approach which hypothesizes a hierarchy of discrete skills that must be mastered? The heated debate during the last seminar session indicated that there are many CUNY reading teachers who are advocates of a basic skills approach and feel it should be reflected in a curricular model for college students. These educators need to define their approach as

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[5] Roger W. Shuy, "A Holistic View of Language," Research in the Teaching of English, 15, No. 2 (May 1981), p. 106.

it applies to college-level students and demonstrate its effectiveness, as do the educators supporting a more holistic approach.

During our closing session, with only the CUNY participants present, we attended to the political and pedagogical aspects of the teaching and assessing of reading and writing. In addition, the value of teaching reading within the context of a content area was raised. Although no conclusions were reached, it was clear from the tone of the comments that this important issue needs further research and discussion.

The reading seminars demonstrated to me that reading researchers have not focused on the specific needs of underprepared college students. Therefore, it is incumbent upon CUNY reading professionals to develop their own research studies. This seminar series was one attempt to further the process of communication among college reading faculty within and outside of CUNY. The curriculum model developed by a Consultant Committee of the Chancellor's Task Force on Reading is another such effort. Now, CUNY reading faculty must utilize their classroom experience, evaluate the curriculum model, and launch their own research projects.

READING ACHIEVEMENT

Anthony R. Petrosky

University of Pittsburgh

Editors' Note: This article originally appeared in Secondary School Reading: What Research Reveals for Classroom Practice, edited by Allen Berger & H. Alan Robinson. It is based on Anthony R. Petrosky's work as consultant and co-author of Reading, Thinking and Writing: Results from the 1979-80 National Assessment of Reading and Literature. Petrosky based much of his presentation at the CUNY seminar on this study.

This review of reading achievement in the secondary schools is based on the 1979-80 assessment of reading and literature conducted by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The assessment was designed to find out what students at three age levels know and can do in a specific academic area. It surveyed the attainments of nine year olds, thirteen year olds, and seventeen year olds to provide a broad portrait of students' reading skills and attitudes toward reading. A variety of item formats, passage types, and levels of difficulty were deliberately included to assess the extent to which such variations might interact with student performance.

As all other NAEP assessments, this one was the product of several years of work by many educators, scholars, and lay persons from all over the nation. Initially, these people designed reading and literature objectives by proposing goals they felt Americans should be achieving in the course of their education. After careful review, the objectives were turned over to writers, whose task it was to create exercises (items) appropriate to the objectives. Once the exercises passed extensive reviews by subject-area specialists, measurement experts, and lay people, they were administered to a probability sample. These samples were chosen in such a way that the results of the assessment could be generalized to an entire national population. That is, on the basis of the performance of about 2,500 seventeen year olds on a given exercise, generalizations could be made about the probable performance of all seventeen year olds in the nation.

Unlike other testing programs, NAEP does not report scores on individuals. In addition to the national results for three age groups, NAEP provides results for groups of respondents. Respondents are classified by sex, race, region of the country, level of parents' education, grade, community size and type, and achievement class. Results are presented for males and females enrolled in school at the time of the assessment; for black and white students (Hispanic students are included along with white

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students); for the Northeastern, Southeastern, Central, and Western regions of the country; for (1) students whose parents have not graduated from high school, (2) students who have at least one parent who has graduated from high school, and (3) students who have at least one parent who has had some education beyond high school. Results are also presented by type of community--advantaged urban, disadvantaged urban, and rural; and size of community--big cities, fringes around big cities, medium cities, and small places. In addition, results are presented in four ranges of achievement or performance: the first achievement level represents the lowest one-fourth of the national sample and the fourth represents the highest one-fourth of the national sample. After assessment data have been collected, scored, and analyzed, the National Assessment publishes reports and disseminates the results as widely as possible.

This discussion of students' achievement in reading is based on the most recent NAEP reading report, Reading, Thinking, and Writing: Results from the 1979-80 National Assessment of Reading and Literature. While the report presents findings for all three age groups, this chapter focuses mainly on the achievements of seventeen year olds.

What We Know

A substantial part of the NAEP reading and literature assessment was devoted to surveying students' attitudes, habits, and practices in reading. Students were asked, for instance, "What kind of a reader are you?" Only 6.2 percent claimed they were poor readers while 62.4 percent thought they were good readers, and 28.9 percent responded that they saw themselves as very good readers. Large percentages of students reported that it was usually easy for them to keep their mind on their reading (63.1%), read long sentences (81%), finish silent reading in class in the amount of time given (68.6%), read a story with new words (51.2%), finish books they have started (71.4%), read books with small print (71%), find a book that interests them (54.8%), read very long books (41.5%), and find a book on a subject that is easy for them to read (81.6%). Almost all students thought it was very important to be able to read, but the picture was somewhat less positive when we looked at how much they said they enjoyed reading. At age nine, 80.9 percent of the students said they enjoyed reading very much; at age seventeen, 42.4 percent said they enjoyed reading very much. At age nine, 3.2 percent responded that they did not enjoy reading at all, while at age seventeen, 5.3 percent responded that they did not enjoy reading at all.

When asked how often they read for enjoyment during their spare time, 53.6 percent of the nine year olds said they read almost every day and 32.7 percent of the seventeen year olds claimed they read almost every day. Of the seventeen year olds, 32.3 percent claimed they read once or twice a week for enjoyment while 26.7 percent reported that they read less than once a week and 7.9 percent said they never read for enjoyment.

When we examine the frequency of seventeen year olds reading in the context of how long they read, we find that most read for less than an hour (75.9%) and only 19.5 percent read for one or two hours while 4.2 percent read for three or more hours. When we look at these figures in comparison with how much television they reported they "watched yesterday," only 38.8

percent said they watched none or less than an hour while 60.8 percent reported watching one to three plus hours. Most (63.6%) would rather spend their free time going to a movie, and only 13.4 percent would spend that time reading a book. When asked which of a group of activities they would enjoy doing the least, 46 percent responded with reading a book.

The picture that emerges from these survey questions is not a very bright or encouraging one. While most students think it is important to read, few read for enjoyment and even fewer would choose to read a book in their spare time. When these teens do read, they read for short periods of time. It is not so much the case that they cannot read, but that they choose not to, especially when given the opportunity to do other things like watch television or go to a movie. When students give reading such a low priority and so little time, we must begin to wonder about their involvement in reading and, consequently, the quality and depth of their reading.

When asked what kind of materials they like to read, the seventeen year olds gave the following order of genres: short stories (42%), fiction books (38%), current news magazines (37%), nonfiction (25%), poetry (17%), editorials (12%), plays (11%), and literary criticism (3%). In addition to asking questions about the kinds of materials they read, we surveyed their values for reading. The results indicated they knew they could read for a number of reasons, but they preferred to read for practical reasons rather than for personal growth or pleasure. And although almost half of the students reported that they read daily newspapers, most reported they learned about current events from television and radio

Although these survey results paint only the broadest picture of seventeen year olds' reading attitudes, habits, and practices, we get a definite sense of these teens as people who think they are good readers, but in fact read very little, and not much at all for enjoyment. While large percentages report they do not have problems with their reading, a third to half report problems finishing inclass reading and finding books that interest them. They watch television more than they read and they prefer going to a movie in their spare time rather than reading. When they do read on their own, it is for very short periods of time. Generally, they value reading most for its presentation of information, not for personal growth or pleasure. In short, these are people who understand the value of reading, but choose not to read very much. When given the opportunity to read, most of them would rather not.

Now that we have a sense of seventeen year olds' general orientation toward reading, we can take a closer look at how well they read. In designing assessment items and interpreting the results, a four-step model of the comprehension process evolved:

1. initial comprehension
2. preliminary inferences and judgments
3. a reexamination of the text in light of these interpretations
4. richer and possibly more accurate comprehension of the text as a whole

Looking at results across a wide range of multiple-choice and open-ended items, the major conclusion must be that American schools have been reasonably successful in teaching the majority of students to complete the first two steps in the process, but have failed to teach more than 5 to 10 percent to move beyond their initial interpretations of texts. As the final NAEP report concluded,

> Students seem satisffed with their initial interpretations of what they have read and seem genuinely puzzled at requests to explain or defend their points of view. As a result, responses to assessment items requiring explanations of criteria, analysis of text, defense of judgments, or points of view were in general disappointing. Few students could provide more than superficial responses to such tasks, and even the better responses showed little evidence of well-developed problem-solving strategies or critical-thinking skills. (p.2)

In order to understand the grounds for the conclusions, we need to delve into students' performance on the various items that indicated student achievement in terms of our four-step model. These include, in addition to the general survey items, items clustered in three groups: explaining responses to written works, evaluating written works, and general responding.

Explaining Responses to Written Works

The first group of exercises included multiple-choice items that asked students to identify the mood of a piece, a character trait, an emotion, or a theme. Then they were directed to explain and substantiate in writing their answers to a question that involved them in making an inference about one of the aspects (mood, character, theme, or emotion) of the selection. Another exercise in this group asked students to identify and explain, using text-based evidence, an important theme or idea they saw in the selection. Since theme is a relatively abstract notion, the question-stems for these exercises were very specific, pointing students toward such things as plot, character, setting, images, languages, and structure as possible approaches to analyzing the selection. Results for all items (including unreleased selections) are summarized in Table 1.

Overall, the results suggested that seventeen year olds are not used to explaining the meaning they draw from texts. Although a reasonably high percentage wrote explanations of their assertions about mood and characterization, the degree of their success (41%) was far below their success (75%) on the inferential multiple-choice items that preceded the open-ended explanatory tasks. Even when students performed adequately, the majority of their explanations turned to summary or synopsis rather than to some systematic analysis of the text or their own ideas and values.

When we look at the results for these open-ended explanatory tasks by race and community, we see that blacks performed 15 to 20 percent below their white counterparts and students from disadvantaged-urban communities performed 11 to 26 percentage points below students from

advantaged-urban communities. Students from rural areas performed considerably above students from disadvantaged communities but 10 to 15 percentage points below students from advantaged-urban communities.

Table 1

Explaining Responses

	Adequate	Barely adequate	Inadequate	Unrateable
Theme				
"i was you" (poem)	4.6%	19.0%	70.3%	6.1%
Unreleased narrative	9.7	20.2	61.6	8.6
Character				
"Somebody's Son" (story)	41.4	42.4	13.6	2.5
Unreleased description*	38.3	43.1	16.3	2.3
Mood				
"Rodeo" (poem)	41.2	37.9	16.6	4.3
Unreleased narrative*	37.8	26.6	32.2	3.4
Emotion				
"Good Dog" (story)	57.7	22.9	11.7	7.7

*Nonfiction

Evaluating Written Works

Two sets of exercises were developed to assess students' evaluative skills. The first set focused on the criteria students bring to reading; it asked them to list three things that make a good story (or poem). The second set focused on students' evaluations of stories and poems by first asking, in a multiple-choice question, if a specific story or poem was good, and then directing them to go on and explain what in the passage had led them to that judgment.

Results from the first set of items revealed that 43 percent of seventeen year olds cited aspects of content as their evaluative criteria for stories, while 46 percent gave subjective reactions such as "interesting," "funny," or "adventurous," and 16 percent cited form. The picture changed somewhat with the evaluative criteria they used for poems. Unlike their reactions to stories, 62.4 percent cited form as an aspect of their evaluative criteria for poems, and only 31.2 percent cited content, while 43.9 percent gave subjective reactions. Generally, students' criteria indicated that they operated on the level of the text as a whole, rather than on individual aspects of the text such as characters, setting, or believability.

Although it is interesting to see how students say they evaluate their reading by looking at their ability to formulate evaluative criteria, the results tell us nothing about their ability to apply these criteria to

written works in reasoned ways. The second set of evaluative exercises asked students to explain their evaluations of texts. The results are summarized in table 2.

Table 2

Evaluating Written Works

	No evaluation	Brief list of assertions	Content, details or summary	Evaluation with evidence
Story--Fable	5.1%	36.8%	38.2%	19.8%
Story--African folk tale (unreleased)	10.1	44.8	24.6	20.6
Poem--"Mother to Son"	6.3	28.1	57.5	8.1
Poem (unreleased)	15.7	54.6	25.6	4.1
Story--"One of These Days"	12.2	48.1	29.9	9.8
Averages	9.9	42.5	35.2	12.5

The majority of the evaluative responses fell into two broad response patterns. Most of the students simply listed vague assertions or observations about the passages. Some of these responses contained references to the text, but most of them were unsupported statements. The second response pattern was a synopsis or summary of the story or poem. Though the evaluative criteria were not explicitly stated in these responses, the students seemed to be singling out the content of the work as their reason for liking or disliking it. Very few of the students wrote evaluations with supporting evidence.

What is most striking and alarming about these responses, besides their quick and easy nature, is their vague, almost universal applicability. Many of the responses could be interchanged across stories and poems and seem to indicate, as the following representative examples do, that even the very best students do not know how to compose specific, successful evaluations.

> It was a very good story because the main points were easily to follow. The theme was very evident, although it did seem a little weak. In addition, the story had much action which kept the reader interested.

> The story was full of suspense and kept the reading [sic] in doubt as to the outcome. The author uses much description in revealing the characters and the setting. There is a hidden meaning running throughout the story and this definitely intrigues the reader. Together with the suspense, the extraordinary description, and the underlying motive, the author has created an interesting story.

When we look at the results for these evaluative tasks by race and community, we see that blacks performed 2.2 to 8.9 percentage points below their white counterparts on the open-ended tasks, and that students from disadvantaged-urban communities performed 2.7 to 13.1 percentage points lower than their counterparts from advantaged-urban communities. Students from rural areas performed from slightly above to 10.3 percentage points above their counterparts from disadvantaged-urban communities, while performing slightly below to 5 percentage points below students from advantaged-urban communities.

General Responding

For these exercises, students were given stories and poems they had never seen before and asked to "write down your thoughts and feelings" or to "write a composition" about the story or poem. Responses to four poems and one story were analyzed using a content analysis scheme that first showed the primary response category a response fell into and then showed additional response categories as they appeared in the same response; this approach focused on the main thrust of each response, while also tabulating instances of other aspects of the response.

Students read and responded to "Somebody's Son," a brief characterization of a son and his letter to his mother in which he discusses his leaving home; to A. E. Housman's poem, "Into My Heart"; and to "Check," a poem by James Stephens. They also responded to two other poems, but these are unreleased and will be used to assess change in the next reading and literature assessment.

The response categories (Egocentric, Retelling, Emotional, Personal-global, Personal-analytic, Evaluation, Reference to other work--general, Reference to other work--specific, Analysis--superficial, Analysis--elaborated, Inferencing, and Generalization) were defined well enough to yield high percentages (all over 90%) of agreement among raters who scored each response for the appearance of any one of the twelve categories and for predominant mode. Since the definitions of these categories are lengthy and accompanied by specific examples, it would be best if readers interested in their specific qualities referred to the complete NAEP report.

Instead of reporting the detailed results of these exercises, let us take a look at the larger picture to get a glimpse of what happens when students are asked to read and respond to a work they have never seen before. First, nearly all (97%) of the responses were rateable; when presented with these selections and only a limited time to develop a response, most seventeen year olds at all ability levels were able to say something. Their responses indicated they had read the selections and understood them well enough to make some kind of appropriate response.

Second, selection overwhelmingly determined the type of response. In regard to predominant response mode, "Into My Heart" generated 71.1 percent inferencing responses, while "Somebody's Son" produced 67.2 percent personal-analytic responses. This trend was apparent for all selections and, furthermore, no other response mode accounted for even half as many

responses to any one passage. It seemed that the characteristics of the selections determine the kind of response students produce.

Third, although each response produced a predominant response mode, there were some commonalities running across the responses. For instance, it was not at all uncommon to find retellings, evaluations, emotions, and inferencing in individual responses. There was a low incidence of egocentric, personal-global, other works general and specific, and either superficial or elaborated analysis in the responses.

And fourth, no matter how sophisicated the responses appeared they were generally superficial and abstract. Like the evaluative responses, they seldom included specifics and are best characterized as series of assertions loosely developed at an abstract level around a single point. And while they were coherent enough, they were, at the same time, underdeveloped. Most were not the careful reasoned responses we might expect from students trained and practiced in writing about their reading.

Conclusion

As stated in the final NAEP report: "The most significant finding from this assessment is that while students learn to read a wide range of material, they develop very few skills for examining the nature of the ideas that they take away from their reading. Though most have learned to make simple inferences about such things as a character's behavior and motivation, for example, and can express their own judgments of a work as 'good' or 'bad,' they cannot return to the passage to explain the interpretations they have made" (p. 2).

These findings seem to be a direct reflection of current practices in testing and instruction. When multiple-choice testing and quick easy discussions dominate the curriculum, how can we expect anything but the most basic performance from students? When reading and writing are separated in the curriculum and when students are not encouraged to discuss or write about their reading in any extended, reasoned way, is it such a surprise that they then lack the more comprehensive thinking and analytic skills?

Sophisticated skills such as analysis, inference, generalizing, evaluating, and theorizing are best, and perhaps only, assessed and taught through extended discourse--speaking and writing. It seems clear that speaking and writing tasks are necessary for the development of these critical thinking skills so absent from students' performance on this assessment. Although there are aspects of reading and literature like literal recall that are perhaps best assessed and taught through multiple-choice exercises and quick classroom discussions, there are other aspects of reading and literature, such as critical thinking skills, that can only be assessed and taught through writing or discussion tasks because they require explanation elaboration, and documentation.

Simply put, students seem not to have learned the problem-solving strategies and critical thinking skills by which to look for evidence to support their interpretations and judgments. A large proportion (75%) have mastered initial literal and inferential skills, but very few (22%) have learned to use evidence. In addition, almost none of the seventeen year

olds demonstrated any knowledge or use of techniques for analyzing a passage. Hardly any of them approached a text through such conventional procedures as paragraph by paragraph (or stanza by stanza) analysis, or by using elements of the passage to comment on such things as setting or character development, or by following a theme or idea through its progression in the text.

While these findings are discouraging, it is encouraging that a large proportion of students were able to make literal and inferential interpretations, and they were able to write summaries and synopses. It seems clear that what these students need most is the training and practice in critical thinking skills that would enable them to go beyond what they already do well.

Two other findings are worth mentioning for both their testing and instructional implications. First, throughout the assessment, text passages played a role. Clearly, the nature of the passage has a strong, shaping influence on students' responses. Second, it seemed equally clear that the variety of item types--multiple-choice and open-ended--showed what neither type alone could. By using both types of exercises, students' skills were viewed along a continuum ranging from literal and inferential comprehension to the more complex critical thinking skills. Either type of exercise alone would have given only a partial, incomplete picture of students' performance.

What Can Be Done?

Now that we know what students can do, we need to ask ourselves what we can do to help them overcome the shortcomings that are so evident in this assessment. One of the most important things administrators and teachers can do is look closely at the kinds of testing used in their schools and classes. Do multiple-choice and quick, easy answer formats dominate the curriculum? If they do, the chances are very high that they are directing instruction along the lines of lower-level skills--the kind assessed by multiple-choice tests. Students need to be tested with the kinds of exercises that encourage the use of critical thinking skills if these skills are to be an important part of the curriculum. This means that we need to create assessments that ask students to write about their reading--assessments that ask them to use their knowledge and conceptual strategies to make interpretations that they substantiate with evidence from texts and their own values and ideas. At the same time, instruction should focus more on the integration of reading and writing, especially by teaching students how to write about their reading. It is not enough to test and instruct people in quick, easy answer approaches to texts.

Second, these critical thinking skills cannot be left to reading and English teachers alone. They are part and parcel of learning in all academic areas and should, as such, be stressed across the content areas. Students in science classes, for instance, can be taught to write lab reports the way scientists write them rather than relying on workbooks and fill-in-the blanks to report their experiments. Students in social science classes can be taught to read and write about their content-area material so they get practice in forming interpretations and evaluations that they substantiate with evidence.

Third, these critical thinking skills cannot be left to writing alone, even though writing is critical to their development. Teachers need to examine their classroom practices to see if they are giving students the opportunities to engage in meaningful discussions where points of view are aired and defended. All too often, classroom discussions are dominated by quick, easy answers and teachers with predetermined answers and hidden agendas. Students need to be involved in genuine problem-solving discussions that focus on their interpretations and their use of evidence to support and criticize their interpretations.

Fourth, institutional support for this kind of systematic reading and writing instruction across the content areas must come from informed administrators working closely with teachers. Together administrators and teachers can organize summer workshops and inservice training to build the kind of integrated reading, writing, and discussing curriculum that will foster the growth of critical thinking skills. We need to recognize that a large proportion of teachers were never taught how to teach these higher order critical thinking skills; consequently, we face a massive inservice need. Initiation for inservice must come from both teachers and administrators, but it will not work unless administrators understand what teachers need and, then, make it possible for them to get it. In short, teachers and administrators need to work for inservice training in writing, question-asking techniques, group discussion strategies, and the integration of reading and writing. We must also face the fact that very little of this inservice training will be effective unless teachers are given opportunities to implement what they have learned in settings conducive to instruction in critical thinking skills. This means smaller classes and teacher aides who either free teachers from the mundane administrative chores or aid them in leading class discussions, writing workshops, and student conferences. These important higher order skills cannot be taught in crowded classes where it is near to impossible to carry on extended discussions and systematic writing assignments.

And fifth, teachers and administrators need to work together to examine the kinds of textbooks they are using in their schools and classes. Do they encourage the quick, easy answer type of discussion, or do they provide opportunities for students to engage in extended discussions and writing tasks? Too many of the textbooks in use are nothing more than quick answer workbooks and as such they cannot foster critical thinking skills.

In our time of diminishing resources for education, it will be extremely difficult for teachers to receive the training and support they need to effectively teach the higher order critical thinking skills in reading, literature, and writing, especially given the fact that they must be stretched out across the curriculum into all content areas. The findings of this national assessment are clear: the nation's seventeen year olds cannot go beyond initial comprehension to extend and defend their readings of texts. If we are going to change this disheartening trend, then we need to make the commitment to teaching critical thinking skills. This inevitably means investments of time and money from the public who must support the educational system for there are no quick, easy, or cheap ways to teach these higher order skills. If students are to learn them, they must engage in genuine problem-solving discussions, and they must talk and write about what they read.

Excerpt from

A PROPOSAL FOR READING STAGES

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Editors' Note: The following is an excerpt from Chapter 2, "A Proposal for Reading Stages," from Jeanne S. Chall's new book, Stages of Reading Development (McGraw-Hill, 1983). Many of the ideas she presents were discussed at the reading seminars when the manuscript was in press. Chall, in her Introduction, notes that these reading stages are presented not as a theory but as a "model" or "a scheme for arranging and interpreting facts from basic and applied research and the wisdom gained from experience in the classroom and the clinic." We begin with a very brief description of Stage 0, Stage 1, and Stage 2 which essentially cover the decoding process and then focus on the later stages because mastery of Stages 3 and 4 are essential for functioning in college.

The Stages

In this introduction to the developmental scheme elaborated in subsequent chapters, the ages and grades given for each stage are only approximations. They should be considered hypothetical, based on current educational achievements and practices. Some readers as young as age 6 may reach a level of reading categorized here as Stage 3. The average American child today reaches the beginning of Stage 3 at about age 9. Still others may not achieve it until age 12, or later, or not at all. How many now reach Stage 5 is not known, but probably fewer than the 40 percent who have some college education. That more sensitive and systematic instruction can help bring many more to this stage seems strongly possible (Bloom, 1976).

Stage 0. Prereading: Birth to Age 6. The Prereading Stage covers a greater period of time and probably covers a greater series of changes than any of the other stages (Bissex, 1980). From birth until the beginning of formal education, children living in a literate culture with an alphabetic writing system accumulate a fund of knowledge about letters, words, and books. The children grow in their control over various aspects of language--syntax and words. And they gain some insights into the nature of words: that some sound the same at their ends or beginnings (rhyme and alliteration), that they can be broken into parts, and that the parts can be put together (synthesized, blended) to form whole words....

From Stages of Reading Development by Jeanne S. Chall. Copyright 1983 by Jeanne S. Chall; used with permission of McGraw-Hill Book Co.

Stage 1. Initial Reading, or Decoding, Stage: Grades 1-2, Ages 6-7. The essential aspect of Stage 1 is learning the arbitrary set of letters and associating these with the corresponding parts of spoken words. In this stage, children and adults interiorize cognitive knowledge about reading, such as what the letters are for, how to know that bun is not bug, and how to know when a mistake is made. This stage has been referred to pejoratively as a "guessing and memory game," or as "grunting and groaning," "mumbling and bumbling," or "barking at print," depending on whether the prevailing methodology for beginning reading instruction is a sight or a phonic approach. The qualitative change that occurs at the end of this stage is the insight gained about the nature of the spelling system of the particular alphabetic language used....

Stage 2. Confirmation, Fluency, Ungluing from Print: Grades 2-3, Ages 7-8.[1] Essentially, reading in Stage 2 consolidates what was learned in Stage 1. Reading stories previously heard increases fluency. Stage 2 reading is not for gaining new information, but for confirming what is already known to the reader. Because the content of what is read is basically familiar, the reader can concentrate attention on the printed words, usually the most common, high-frequency words. And with the basic decoding skills and insights interiorized in Stage 1, the reader can take advantage of what is said in the story and book, matching it to his or her knowledge and language. Although some additional, more complex phonic elements and generalizations are learned during Stage 2 and even later, it appears that what most children learn in Stage 2 is to use their decoding knowledge, the redundancies of the language, and the redundancies of the stories read. They gain courage and skill in using context and thus gain fluency and speed....[2]

Stage 3. Reading for Learning the New: A First Step. When readers enter Stage 3, they start on the long course of reading to "learn the new"--new knowledge, information, thoughts and experiences. Because their background (world) knowledge, vocabulary, and cognitive abilities are still limited at this stage, the first steps of Stage 3 reading are

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[1] It is possible that Stage 2 continues throughout one's life and is characterized among adults by reading popular fiction, magazines, mysteries, and some parts of the daily newspaper--reading from which one does not learn much that is new or exciting but which is confirmed and satisfying.

[2] The difference between reading a story at Stage 0 and at Stage 2 was illustrated to me by a brother and sister, aged 7 and 4. Each wanted to read to me the little Nutshell Library Book, Pierre, by Maurice Sendak. The 7-year-old, the Stage 2 reader, grabbed it first. He was older and stronger. He then read it through fluently, with an obvious sense of the meaning. The 4-year-old sister grabbed it in turn, over his strong protest. "She can't read," he insisted. "I can too," she said. He went along with my tolerance of her immaturity, and the Stage 0 child read the story through with such fluency and expression that I might have accepted her performance as reading if it were not for her Stage 2 brother's protestations that she wasn't really reading the words.

usually best developed with materials and purposes that are clear, within one viewpoint, and limited in technical complexities. This is in contrast to Stage 4 where multiplicity of views, complexity of language and ideas, as well as subtleties of interpretation are the expected.

In a sense, entering Stage 3 fits the traditional conception of the difference between primary and later schooling: in the primary grades, children learn to read; in the higher grades, they read to learn. During Stages 1 and 2 what is learned concerns more the relating of print to speech while Stage 3 involves more the relating of print to ideas. Very little new information about the world is learned from reading before Stage 3; more is learned from listening and watching. It is with the beginning of Stage 3 that reading begins to compete with these other means of knowing. However, at the beginning of Stage 3, learning from print is still less efficient than learning from listening and watching. Hypothetically, by the end of Stage 3 the efficiency of reading may equal and begin to surpass that of the other means of gaining new information, particularly listening.

Stage 3 reading is also characterized by the growing importance of word meanings and of prior knowledge. The need to know some new things, if more is to be learned from reading, becomes greater. Readers need to bring knowledge and experience to their reading if they are to learn from it (Chall, 1947, 1950; Kintsch, 1974). They also need to learn a process--how to find information in a paragraph, chapter, or book, and how to go about finding what one is looking for efficiently.

It is significant that in traditional schools, the 4th grade, age 9, was the time for starting the study of the so-called subject areas--history, geography, and natural science. The curriculum in the first three grades included the language arts and math. The content subjects were not included until children had mastered enough of the literacy skills to deal with the books used to teach them about times and places and ideas removed from their direct experience.

The findings from the readability research of the past fifty years seem to fit this stage as proposed (Chall, 1958; Klare, 1974-1975). Stage 3 fits the data on and the experiences with the distinctions between primary level reading materials and materials at the 4th-grade readability level and above. The materials at 4th-grade level and higher begin to go beyond the elemental, common experiences of the unschooled or barely schooled. To write out even the simplest informative materials--materials that present ideas that the reader does not already have--a readability level of at least Grade 4 is usually required. Materials at Grade 4 readability level begin to contain more unfamiliar, "bookish," abstract words (ones that are usually learned in school or from books) and a higher proportion of long and complex sentences. (Such words may be learned from TV but probably only from the public service programs.) While the learner is in the decoding (Stage 1) and confirming (Stage 2) stages, the task is to master the print; with Stage 3 the task becomes the mastering of ideas. Because this is a task quite different from, and probably more difficult than, those of Stages 1 and 2, it can be mastered only in a limited way. I propose that for most children, Stage 3 reading means learning how to learn from reading, but essentially from only one point of view.

The reading in this stage is essentially for facts, for concepts, for how to do things. If there is any reading for nuance and variety of viewpoint, it is probably in the reading of fiction. One may hypothesize that the time taken to progress from Stage 3 to Stage 4 relates to the time it takes to acquire knowledge in the many areas needed to read and understand the multiple viewpoints encountered in Stage 4.

One might further divide Stage 3 into two phases: Phase A, covering the first half, from about grades 4-6(ages 9-11), and Phase B, covering grades 7-8 and/or 9(ages 12-14).

The first phase, Stage 3A, includes development of the ability to read beyond egocentric purposes, to reading about conventional knowledge of the world. At the end of Stage 3A (Grade 6), individuals are able to read serious material of adult length but falling somewhat short of the reading difficulty of most adult popular literature.

Stage 3A does not usually require special knowledge for reading informational materials or fiction. Indeed, "first books," that is, introductions to subjects, are commonly read by 4th- 6th graders.

Stage 3B, junior-high level, brings readers closer to the ability to read on a general adult level. The Reader's Digest and other popular magazines, popular adult fiction, and local newspapers are within the reader's ability by the end of this phase. Newsweek, Time, and other news magazines are still somewhat beyond this stage.

As readers move from the first to the second phase of Stage 3, they also grow in their ability to analyze what they read and to react critically to the different viewpoints they meet. Much can be done here in reading critically, but it is better and more consistently done in Stage 4 when more of what is read is known and the reader's critical abilities are more developed.

Stage 4. Multiple Viewpoints: High School, Ages 14-18. The essential characteristic of reading in Stage 4 is that it involves dealing with more than one point of view. For example, in contrast to an elementary school textbook on American history, which presupposes Stage 3 reading, the textbook at the high-school level requires dealing with a variety of view points. Compared to the textbooks in the lower grades, the increased weight and length of high-school texts no doubt can be accounted for by greater depth of treatment and greater variety in points of view. Stage 4 reading may essentially involve an ability to deal with layers of facts and concepts added on to those acquired earlier. These other viewpoints can be acquired, however, because the necessary knowledge was learned earlier. Without the basic knowledge acquired in Stage 3, reading materials with multiple viewpoints would be difficult.

How is Stage 4 acquired? Mostly, through formal education--the assignments in the various school textbooks, original and other sources, and reference works in the physical, biological, and social sciences; through reading of more mature fiction; and through the free reading of books, newspapers, and magazines. Dealing with more than one set of facts, various theories, and multiple viewpoints, as one must in Stage 4, gives one

practice in acquiring ever-more-difficult concepts and in learning how to acquire new concepts and new points of view through reading.

Stage 5. Construction and Reconstruction--A World View: College, Age 18 and Above. Stage 5, the most mature stage, I take from Perry's (1970) study of intellectual development during the college years. He contrasted a quantitative approach to knowledge (Stage 4) with a more qualitative approach:

> In our reports, the most difficult instructional moment for the students--and perhaps therefore for the teachers as well--seems to occur at the transition from the conception of knowledge as a quantitative accretion of discrete rightness (including the discrete rightnesses of multiplicity in which everyone has a right to his own opinion) to the conception of knowledge as the qualitative assessment of contextual observations and relationships (Perry, 1970, p. 210).

When Stage 5 is reached, one has learned to read certain books and articles in the degree of detail and completeness that one needs for one's purpose, starting at the end, the middle, or the beginning. A reader at Stage 5 knows what not to read, as well as what to read. To reach this stage is to be able to use selectively the printed material in those areas of knowledge central to one's concern. Whether all people can reach Stage 5 reading, even at the end of four years of college, is open to study. Some evidence, however, suggests that more college students reach this qualitative stage earlier than they did in previous generations (Perry, 1970).

Stage 5 can be seen as reading that is essentially constructive. From reading what others say, the reader constructs knowledge for himself or herself. The processes depend upon analysis, synthesis, and judgment. The reader makes judgments as to what to read, how much of it to read, and at what pace, and in how much detail. And when many sources are used, even if only two, he or she decides what synthesis is to be made. What does this mean? It means a struggle to balance one's comprehension of the ideas read, one's analysis of them, and one's own ideas on them.

Past knowledge about the subject and broad general knowledge are needed for selecting what to read, for comprehending it, and for making a useful synthesis. Previous knowledge and familiarity with the ideas make a rapid reading rate possible. If the texts are unfamiliar, a slower, study-type pace is needed.

Generally, Stage 5 means that one has the ability to construct knowledge on a high level of abstraction and generality and to create one's own "truth" from the "truths" of others. While difficult philosophical and historical works may require Stage 5 reading to be understood, much fiction can also be understood at more than one level. Moby Dick, for example, can be understood as an adventure story or as a profound tragedy of retribution.

Relationships among the Reading Stages. I have hypothesized that each stage presupposes skills acquired in the previous stage, that these

are generally subsumed as new skills are acquired, and that each stage is subsumed by the next stage. . . .

Stage 3, the first stage of reading to learn, presupposes abilities to use context and fluency in reading that are acquired in Stage 2. Without these characteristics, the reading of materials with new concepts, names, and facts would be difficult. Only when the fundamental decoding skills are mastered (Stage 1) and fluency has become habitual (Stage 2) can reading become useful as a tool for learning, even when the new information is relatively straightforward and unencumbered by a variety of viewpoints and subtleties. Because Stage 3 reading requires accurate attention to facts and details, decoding skills acquired at Stage 1 are still used. And because it requires confidence to move ahead even if a word or idea is not gotten immediately, Stage 3 makes use of Stage 2 fluency.

In a similar manner, Stage 4 subsumes Stage 3, and Stage 5 subsumes Stage 4. Understanding of one viewpoint on a subject or topic must be developed so that multiple viewpoints can be understood. From multiple viewpoints, a world viewpoint that depends on the ability to reconstruct and construct anew from what one reads may be achieved. . . .

FINDING A SENSE OF WONDER IN LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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Editors' Note: The following paper was originally presented in its entirety at the NCTE Institute on the Impact of Child Language in May, 1982 and was adapted for presentation at the CUNY Reading Seminars and for this issue of Resource.

There is probably no greater vehicle for creating and sustaining the sense of wonder than that of human language. We have eyes and ears and other senses with which we take in our universe and try to know it. No greater equipment seems possible to us. But right behind these senses, in sequence if not in importance, is the language which we have to recreate what we sense, to preserve it, reflect on it and sustain the wonder which our eyes and ears first glimpse.

Age is the villain here. As we get older we forget our sense of wonder about the here and now and rely more and more on our recreations of that wonder through our literature, our music and our art, all three of which are a kind of language effort to preserve what our senses tell us daily. We have to fight very hard to go to the stimuli in nature which gave us this sense of wonder originally when we were small children with little more to do than make use of the receptive competence with which we were born.

The fact that this learning to rely on the language representations of the world characterizes mankind as we grow older is justification enough for our learning to do it well. If it is our fate to talk about reflections rather than real events, we may as well learn it to the best of our capacities.

Age is also the villain for our civilization, not just for our individual selves. As we weave our webs of civilization from the center toward our outermost edges, our focus is placed more and more on the task of capturing our food, storing up insects, expanding our possessions. We become fixated on the local, on the self and we lose our sense of wonder in the things that caused us to do this in the first place. As Konner points out, the human spirit easily gets underused and underdeveloped, losing its sense of wonder in not only the natural world but the human world as well.[1]

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[1] Melvin Konner, The Tangled Wing: Biological Constraints of the Spirit (New York: Holt, Reinhart & Winston, 1982).

It is not my purpose to send us back to our childlike sense of wonder in the simple act of seeing the world we live in. Annie Dillard has already done that quite well for us in her Pilgrim at Tinker Creek.[2] Instead I suggest that we go back slowly, layer by layer, first looking at the wonders of the language we use to capture the world long enough to recreate it through language so that we can reflect upon it.

One of the things that surprises linguists daily (even though there is probably no good reason to be surprised by it) is that people use language without being the slightest bit aware of it. In fact, when we are aware of it, this awareness sometimes interferes with our use of it. In one Peanuts cartoon series, for example, the perennial troublemaker, Lucy, caused Charlie Brown to be aware of his tongue and he was unable to say anything at all for several days. Some public speakers say that when they begin to monitor their own speech, they are either getting tired or they have run out of useful things to say.

The fact that we are unaware of language as we use it means that we have learned it well enough to focus on using it to represent things, to think with or to create our own identities. And this is probably the beginning of the end of our conscious learning of it. The wonder of this is that it happens so quickly and so easily. By the age of two or three, children move to this level of oral language ability to a very high degree. If anything about language can astonish us, stop us in our tracks and cause us to stand in wonder, it should be this. How is it that without a curriculum, without a set of materials, without spirit masters, without trained instructors and without elaborate teacher's manuals, three year old children accomplish an amazingly complex symbolization which involves the mastery of phonology, morphology, syntax, pragmatics, semantics and discourse rules?

As a linguist, this gives me a great sense of wonder. As a human, this gives me a great sense of awe in the potential and learning abilities of my fellow inhabitants on this earth.

Let us stop for a minute or two and consider exactly what it is that enables the child of three to accomplish such a phenomenon. What are the conditions under which human language is so efficiently mastered? One might say glibly that the infant linguist has nothing much else to do but learn a language and that if we were to recreate this learning in the schools we would need also to recreate all the nurturing and total attention that an infant receives 24 hours a day. But there is more to it than this. The language learning conditions which the schools fail to provide are considerably more than time and nurture, however important these may be.

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[2] Annie Dillard, Pilgrim at Tinker Creek (New York: Harper and Row, 1974).

In Staton, Shuy and Kreeft's recent research on the daily dialogue journal writing (written communication) between sixth graders and their teacher, they conclude that there are three underlying considerations which characterize this phenomenon.[3] It should not be surprising that these considerations are the same ones that characterize that marvelously efficient first-language acquisition of infants. They are that language is functional, interactive, and self-generated.

1. The functional consideration. In both the dialogue journals and in native language learning there is a need to use language to get things done. This consideration is so obvious that it seems to go right past us. Most important things can be realized better by stating their opposites: people do not often use language to not get things done. On the contrary, it is patently clear that we use language because we need to, we have a function to perform--to report something, to promise, to deny, to request information, to apologize, to give an opinion, etc. Linguists refer to this using language to get things done as "functional language." Such language begins with a baby's first cries at birth, a noise which, although it does not have the form of a complaint, most certainly functions as one. By the age of two or three, this child has learned the appropriate sounds, grammar and vocabulary to give human language to this function, but the function was there long before the language.

Staton used language functions as the unit of analysis in analyzing the dialogue journals she studied. She was able to do this largely because this type of writing is functional. The students and the teacher use it to get things done. This is a critical distinction to make because much, if not most, writing done in the schools is not functional. The kind of writing we see most is that which tries to expose the thoughts and language of the students, making them vulnerable for teacher evaluation. Most frequently in our education system, students do not talk or write because they need to, because they want something or are motivated to communicate. Instead we have structured the classroom in such a way that their functions are reduced to a tricky game of saying or writing as little as possible in order to avoid the impending evaluation of the teacher. To open up the communication of teacher and student to something natural, to something like that which happens outside of school, to something like that in which children accomplish the greatest linguistic task of their lives, the learning of their mother tongue, would be to fly directly in the face of the school's major social functions, which are to be orderly and quiet and to produce scores which look good when compared to scores of other schools, and would countermand what is erroneously thought to be the major function of teachers, to evaluate the work of their students.

So here we have it. The school's functions and the teachers' functions win out over the students' functions. We are bigger and more powerful than children are. They are only neophytes who don't know what we know. They don't have taxpayers, school boards and principals on their backs. All they have to do is learn--or something. But this reversal of priorities runs very serious risks. For the schools to favor their own

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[3] Jana Staton, et al., "Analysis of Dialogue Journal Writing as a Communicative Event," Final Report, Vol. 1 (ERIC ED 214 196, 1982).

functions over the natural communicative functions of the students is illogical (from the perspective of learning), unnatural (on the basis of how communication takes place in all other areas of life), and counter-productive (from the clear evidence of the effectiveness of language learning under other, functional and natural conditions).

The dialogue journal writing research and practice which Staton reports returns writing to its natural state. Both teacher and student use language to get things done--personal things, interpersonal things, academic things--life things in general. They are not evaluated on their products any more than we would assign grades of B or C to the effectiveness of each turn in an everyday conversation with a friend or colleague. Such grading is not natural; it is performance. The denaturalizing of language in education, the reduction of language to the level of performance, like reciting a poem before doting aunts and uncles, has led to a concommitant de-functionalizing of language. Just like the recital, children are forced to use language, not because of the functional need, but because they are required to show something about how well they know it. Can we imagine an adult world in which, for example, accountants were required, eight hours a day, to respond only with language which showed that they knew something about accounting?

The first consideration, then, for the successful use of language in education, is that it recapture the natural event of communication, that it be functional.

2. The condition of interactiveness. The second condition necessary for establishing something equivalent to the success which the infant enjoys in first language learning is interactiveness. Most of our lives are spent interacting with others by means of language. By the time children enter school they have spent virtually all of their language-using lives interacting with other people. Suddenly, in first grade, it all stops. Days which were spent in joyful communication with others are now reduced to highly monitored, infrequent responses to teacher questions. One study which I made of six elementary classrooms in a West Coast school showed, for example, that in the 12 lessons video-taped for analysis, little of the classroom talk concerned doing the content of the subject of the lesson, language arts. This is not to say that no content was mentioned or learned. The lessons of only two of the six teachers, for example, developed the content topics to any form of resolution. By analogy to everyday conversation, the other four teachers did the equivalent of bringing up a subject for interaction but then not taking it to any logical destination.

Hugh Mehan[*] has pointed out that the major interactional sequence in classroom talk is the three part exchange between teacher and student:

1. Teacher initiation;
2. Student response;

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[*] Hugh Mehan, "What Time Is It Denise? Asking Known Information Questions in Classroom Discourse," Theory Into Practice, 18 (October 1979), pp. 285-294.

3. Teacher evaluation.

The twelve lessons analyzed here support Mehan's observation. By far the majority of teacher student exchanges are, in fact:

1. Teacher question;
2. Student response;
3. Teacher evaluation of student response.

This interaction through question-asking strategies in these classrooms can be approached from several perspectives.

It is instructive, for example, to display the ratio of questions to the total number of utterances by each teacher, as Figure 1 shows:

Teacher	A	B	C	D	E	F
	5.03	2.78	7.82	2.65	3.42	3.1

Figure 1: Ratio of Questions to Total Number of Utterances. That is, one question per ___ number of teacher utterances

It is not surprising to see that teachers A and C, who expend most of their classroom talk on "doing school" rather than on the content of language arts, also ask by far the fewest questions. In a sample used in this study, it was possible to find only 67 student initiated exchanges, all of them questions. This represents three percent of the total of all the initiations in these classes, the other 95% being by the six teachers. Of the 1,953 utterances initiated by the teachers in this sample, 597 were questions, yielding an average of one question per 3.27 teacher utterances.

It is apparent, then, that of the interaction which takes place in these classrooms, a great deal of importance is placed on questions. The remainder of the teacher utterances were about equally divided between evaluation of student responses to the teachers' questions and various introductory remarks and directives. Two of the teachers whose classroom talk centered on management are less likely to have a high ratio of questions simply because their time is spent on directives and evaluations.

The point of this example should be clear. Almost one-third of all utterances made by teachers in this study were questions. Where else in life does such a ratio occur? What kind of imbalance from the natural interaction which takes place outside of school does this ratio suggest?

This is, of course, not news. Obviously a strong case can be made for turn-taking in classrooms. "Otherwise all would be chaos," the defenders claim. The strong principles of democracy which guide us dictate that each child should get a chance to interact in a given lesson. One way to assure equal opportunity for interaction is to allocate turns through teacher questions. But what does such democracy do to language? It reduces it to a series of short, unelaborated, predictable, evaluated student responses to questions generated by the teacher for purposes which have nothing to do with language development and little to do with any-

thing except the preservation of the social equality of turn-taking and the opportunity for the teacher to evaluate how the children are doing and see if they are paying attention. These are not very lofty sights.

It is not very difficult to make a case for interaction in learning. Plato preferred the dialogue. So did Jesus Christ. The European post-graduate system of "reading" rather than formal course-taking places graduate students in dialogue with their mentors. The medical profession makes use of the intern system. Out of wisdom unaccounted for in written knowledge, mothers talk to their babies long before the babies talk back. Marriages go bad when dialogue breaks down. Countries go to war when there is no dialogue between them. A new field of negotiation has developed out of the inability of management and labor to interact effectively. In all of these cases, when language is absent, when it is a mere performance and when it is not functional and interactive, communication breaks down.

It should not be too difficult to make the connection between the disasters that result when interaction is reduced or eliminated in everyday natural life and the disasters that result in the schools when interaction is minimized or eliminated.

Part of the problem stems from our belief that the teacher is the imparter of knowledge. I used to believe this too. I stood in front of the class and gave daily lectures with little or no interaction. My concept of myself was that of a performer. I would talk; they would listen. Somewhere along the line I learned that this was not a very joyful experience for either of us. Finally I learned to be a participant in my own classes rather than a performer. The key was to interact with my students. I asked them questions, to be sure, but the real gain was that they also asked me questions. We entered the subject of my courses as learners together. I may have had an experience advantage on them but I, too, managed to learn things during the course. We attacked new problems or situations together and we thought aloud in front of each other, made mistakes, admitted them, learned from them and went on to the next level of understanding.

The point here is not that language learning of all types is improved by interaction; the point is that it <u>requires</u> interaction. The efficiency of our native language acquisition tells us this. Logic tells us this. Observation tells us this. Linguistic theory tells us this. Why is it that the schools don't do it then? It's not hard. In fact it makes teaching a great deal more like living, a great deal less artificial, a great deal more pleasant, a great deal more unpredictable and exciting.

3. <u>The condition of being self-generated</u>. The third condition necessary for establishing something equivalent to the success which the infant enjoys in learning a first language is that the language be self-generated. This means no more than it says. The speaker or writer needs to generate the information, feeling or perspective by him or herself. It cannot be generated by the teacher or anyone else. Saying somebody else's words or ideas is not natural language. This happens when children are given repetition drills or coaching. Such a procedure is no more valid for assessing a child's language ability than it would be to

devalue an actor because he played the villain in a play rather than the hero. It is when we are personally responsible that our language achieves a level at which it can be fairly evaluated. The extent to which such self-generation goes is problematic. It is clear that there is little to be appreciated in mere repetition of coached words. But what level of responsibility does a student have for a topic he or she did not pick? Is every one equally responsible for developing an idea that the teacher generates?

We have learned, from research on language used in court cases in which the FBI has surreptitiously recorded language thought to reveal criminality, that topic initiation and recycling is an important indication of a speaker's intentionality.[5] By selecting a topic in a conversation a speaker indicates clearly what he wants to talk about. On topics which they want to talk about, speakers not only have more to say but also they use more rational arguments, they elaborate more, illustrate better and are more animated. If they recycle this same topic later in the same conversation, their intentions are even clearer.

The point here is that speakers clearly do better with language in terms of all the characteristics upon which they might be evaluated when both the topic and the content of the topic are self-generated. Why then would we not expect students to do better in both oral and written language when they are permitted, as adults are in most situations of life, to pick their own topics and use their own words? My shadow self responds: "Because they do not have worthy topics and they do not yet have language which is good enough with which to discuss topics." My shadow self is, of course, quite wrong. Again the evidence comes from the dialogue journals of sixth graders, expecially in the research of Staton, who shows clearly all of the characteristics of the development of rational thinking on topics which are not academic and all of the characteristics of effective language use when the topics are self-generated.[6] . . .

These three considerations in language use: functional, interactive, self-generative, which characterize the astonishing ability which even infants have as they learn their mother tongue so quickly and effectively, have not been central to the study of literacy.

In the field of reading, we have widely assumed that one learns to read stories written by skilled authors or materials deliberately produced to match the presumed vocabulary, interest or world experience of beginners to this task. Such materials can scarcely be considered functional. They do not do for the student something that the student wants to get done. In fact, one might question whether any beginning reading materials produced for the general consumption of all students could be, in any way, functional. They "get done" what the teacher, school or publisher thinks they should get done. But how can they know? Furthermore, the "getting done"

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[5] Roger W. Shuy, "Four Misconceptions About Clarity and Simplicity," Language Arts, 58 (May 1981), pp. 556-561.

[6] Staton, Vol. 2 (ERIC ED 214 197, 1982).

is receptive, not productive. To get things done means to do something oneself, not to receive something by oneself.

The artificiality of schooling has led us down a primrose path here. The natural learning of mother tongue was productive and functional. The teaching of reading is receptive and functionless. It also suffers from being out of natural sequence with learning to write, which usually comes much later. It is also guided by an unproved reductionist learning theory that claims, without evidence, that the gestalt of reading can be learned best by taking natural language apart, breaking it into little, artificial pieces and then gradually reassembling it again. In contrast, the constructivist approach argues for keeping the natural language intact, working with the useful redundancy offered by context, and determining the meaning of the written words.[7]

But even the best constructionist approach to reading must be asked how such reading can be functional. To find the answer we need look no further than to how our infant linguists do their astonishing analyses so well. Do they learn to listen for a long period of time, say 3 or 4 years, before they say anything? Once in a while this happens, but not very often. Much more common is to hear children uttering talk on talk-like things very, very early. The process is not linear: listen first, then talk. It is simultaneously jumbled. If we are to take this process as a model it would be only fair to argue that the productive work of literacy, writing, should be concurrent with the receptive work of reading.[8]

If such simultaneity were practiced in our classrooms, the function issue would be immediately solved. The students would write and read what they wrote. But if they were to read only what they wrote, their education might not progress very quickly. And this leads us back once more to the second condition, interaction.

Research in dialogue journal writing shows us that even at the early elementary levels, teachers and students can write back and forth to each other effectively. In such cases, the students not only reread what they have written in their previous turn but also, of course, they have to read what the teacher has written to them.[9] And if what is written is important to their young lives, the exchange has been functional. They write about personal topics, interpersonal topics or academic topics. But they choose the topics. The teacher also has the right to choose topics and if she/he is an effective teacher, the choice of topics will be grounded in what that teacher knows about the child, the topic and the world in general.

But there is still more. We have long recongized modeling as an effective method of teaching. At the early elementary level there may be important social modeling going on but what kind of language modeling do we see? In classrooms where one-third of the teacher utterances are ques-

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[7] Shuy, "Four Misconceptions."

[8] Jerome Harste, et al., "Examining Instructional Assumptions: The Child as Informant," Theory Into Practice, 19 (Summer, 1980), pp. 170-178.

[9] Staton, Vol. 1.

tions, one-third are evaluations and the last third are directives related to the classroom management of "doing school," there isn't much modeling of the many language functions necessary for successful life communication. Furthermore, the research evidence also shows us that the functions of question asking are not much practiced by the students (less than five percent of all utterances made by the children in this 6 classroom sample were questions, and these were of a procedure type, not a probing-for-knowledge type). Nor is it socially appropriate for students to model the other two major language functions of teachers: giving directives and evaluating. This doesn't leave the students with much to model after.

How could this be changed? By changing the nature of classroom talk from the ritualized formula that Mehan discovered (teacher question-student response-teacher evaluation of student response) to that of a more natural conversation. This means that students will need to be allowed to initiate questions, for example, just as they have been doing during the period of the greatest learning of their lives--their preschool days. It means that students will need to be allowed to initiate topics, not simply submit to the topics of the textbook or the teacher. It means that students will need to be encouraged to seek out what they need to know with an able teacher-guide to the mysteries of education. In short, it means that education will need to be more functional, self-generated and interactive.

Such a route to literacy through natural language, through the use of language made by the infant linguists who accomplish so much in so little time, will require a great deal of reshaping of our current philosophy and practice. The dark spector of tradition lurks in every corner. How will we keep order if students are allowed to bring up any topics they want? How do we teach the prescribed content without structured textbooks and teachers manuals? How will we find time to engage in natural conversation with all our students, much less to write to them every night the way Los Angeles sixth grade teacher Leslee Reed (and there are now many others like her) does? How do we satisfy the general public's desire for us to evaluate our students if we value what they say or write for its cognitive content more than its social effect?

These are serious questions but they have to be addressed. Perhaps we should begin such a journey by asking what will happen if we don't return language and literacy to some purer natural state. The answer is clear. We will continue to:

1. Follow reductionist rather than constructivist, holistic practices, stressing decontextualized skills as though these were the end of our work.

2. Let publishers tell us who our students are by accepting their middle-of-the-road stereotypes of what they need to know rather than by calling on our own knowledge of the minds and bodies we experience each day in our classes.

3. Let the evaluation-crazed general public and

testing industry continue to dictate what we teach, whether we believe it to be true or not, simply because they think the ultimate end of teaching is in grading, comparing scores of one child with those of another or the scores of one school with those of another.

4. Let those who traditionally would trade the cognitive functions of schooling for acceptable social behavior (fitting in, being passive, being quiet, never complaining, not making waves) have their way and continue to dehumanize the role of teaching to that of being a policeman, babysitter and secret agent.

In sharp contrast to this gloomy picture (but one which is not far from a description of the status quo) is one in which we try to recapture that marvelous sense of wonder that our infant linguists had up to the time we conscripted them in first grade and turned their joyful learning into basal readers, spirit masters, drills, rigid turn taking, six years of studying the four formal mathematical operations, formulaic order, and, above all else, acceptable social behavior.

And how can that marvelous sense of wonder be recaptured? One solution is to take literacy out of the schools altogether. We have very good (irrefutable, in fact) evidence that language learning works a great deal better outside of school than inside. But I don't believe I'd hold my breath for this to happen. A better solution lies elsewhere, at least as a next-step effort. To take language learning and literacy out of the schools means either that someone else would have to guide it (parents, relatives, friends or non-school teachers) or that the traditional school structure would have to be radically redirected. These are not times for such revolutionary postures. Even when the socio-political climate was readier for such ideas (the 1960's, for example) the ultimate revolution never came about and we soon forgot about the Ivan Illyches and John Holts of that era.

That leaves us with the task of trying to recapture that glorious sense of wonder which leads to effective learning within the comfortable confines of our current system. How can we do it? This brings us back to an examination of the three major considerations of language that are present in our most effective learning: the functional, self-generated, interactive use of language. The secret seems to be to determine ways of incorporating this kind of language into our reading and writing classes. The following list of suggestions is still tentative and incomplete but it has the advantage of a strong language and learning theory basis:

1. Stop being dependent on basal readers or other commerically prepared language arts materials to dictate our teaching. Such materials are defective on many levels of theory. For example, the reductionist, component skills theory which underlies basal readers has not been demonstrated to reflect the actual acquisition sequence of children. There is no convincing evidence that children learn to decode first and then to comprehend. . . .

2. Stop standarized tests of reading, writing and other pretentions at assessing children's progress in these areas. The moment such tests arrived on the scene, teaching and learning became politicized. The name of the game began to be "How does our school system, state, school, or class compare with other systems, states, schools or classes?" What happened to our professional claim to teach individual children to move from where they are to where they can be? The salvation of teaching as a profession is in our students. Most of us do this kind of work at all only because of children. We have not been given an effective and convincing reason for subordinating our concern for children to the political concerns of looking good. We have overlooked Lev Vygotsky's idea of the zone of proximal development, a notion of potential individual growth, and focused our competitive lust on showing other school systems, states, schools and classes how much better we are than they.[10]

3. Join writing with reading in our earliest elementary literacy programs. No convincing linguistic or learning theory tells us to separate them. Nowhere else in life do we focus on receptive skills sequentially before we think about productive ones. For example, we do not tell our children to watch baseball for three years before we try to play it. We do not tell them to develop receptive competence in bicycle riding before they try it themselves. We do not tell them to read the Bible before they start to go to church. To write is to read, as Staton has observed.[11] The separation of these literacy components has not proved to be effective for either of them.

4. Make our classrooms communicative, not evaluative. The teacher's role needs to be redefined from that of a mere mechanic of evaluating what children know to a communicator, one who shares his or her own wonder and excitement, one who communicates wisdom, not mere knowledge, one who approaches learning with the full expectation that he or she, along with the students, will learn something new each day. In order to do this we need, as Ram Dass puts it, to "Stop saying and start being."[12] To get to such a dignified place, however, the old stereotypes of teaching and learning will need to be destroyed. For example, it is not necessarily better to be right than to be wrong. An interesting or creative wrong answer, one which displays reasoning ability or ingenuity, must be valued over a rote right answer. We have found, in the field of language learning, that there is no way to learn a language without being wrong in it. Furthermore, there are progressive stages of wrongness which move us closer and closer toward being right. It is not a matter of two opposite polarities. It is a continuum. If we judge a continuum as a polarity we miss the richest aspects of growth completely.

To be communicative means, simply, to engage in conversation with students. This means, rather than lecturing or performing at them, to talk

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[10] Lev S. Vygotsky, Mind and Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes, ed. Michael Cole (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978).

[11] Staton, Vol. 1.

[12] Ram Dass, The Only Dance There Is, Thoughts Along the Spiritual Way (New York: Doubleday, 1974)..

with them. Talk involves bringing up topics and responding to the topics of others. This requires the need to achieve mutuality with students, just the way we do this in everyday conversation with friends and colleagues. Every day conversation includes the functions of evaluating and giving directives, the two most common language functions found in teacher talk, but not to the wide extent that it is found in the classrooms studied. Such conversation also includes the every day language functions of reporting facts, reporting opinions, predicting, responding to questions, denying, complaining, apologizing, promising, asking questions, requesting clarification, and many others. In most classrooms, students also use very few of these language functions, being limited primarily to responding to teacher's known information questions, the major function of which is to provide a basis for teacher evaluation.

The concept of the "community of scholars" is the ideal here. Dialogue is the key. One way to accomplish such dialogue with our students has been illustrated in Staton's dialogue-journal studies. When the students and their teacher write to each other in a conversational style each day, they accomplish the dialogue which the constraints of large classes, time, space and order would otherwise preclude occurring in their lives. . . .

Communicative learning need not be limited, of course, to the dialogue journal. This is only one very effective way to achieve it. Once we rid ourselves of the other stereotypes and dictums which constrain naturalness in learning, such as the need to have quietness, the need to incessantly evaluate, the teachers' need to be the dispensers of information and to believe that their task is to pour such information into the heads of their students, it may be possible to do something about communicative talk as well. It is my opinion, however, that we will move more quickly in the direction of communicative, interactive, functional, self-generated learning, especially in literacy, by first taking smaller steps. The dialogue journal is such a step. By taking this simple, inexpensive, not very time consuming effort, we run the risk of improving the quality of our students' lives immeasurably and, at the same time, making our own work a great deal more fulfilling.

ON ROGER SHUY, LINGUISTICS, AND COLLEGE READING

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Roger Shuy's paper is based on his experience in working with elementary school teachers, but it is also applicable to the teaching of college reading. The same principles that apply to child language use are relevant to young adults. Thus, each of the ideas which Shuy presents in his papers-- functional consideration, condition of interactiveness, and the condition of being self-generated--can be extended to the curriculum of the college reading course.

First, as Shuy says, most of the writing done in school is non-functional; a great extent of the reading done in many college reading courses is also non-functional. Classroom activities focus around workbooks or textbooks with isolated, unrelated articles. Questions are generated by the author of text and perhaps, the teacher, serving as the focus of the class.

However, in order to make classroom language functional, work should focus around a theme or themes that relate to the students' interests, needs and concerns. There should be content that is present not only to provide a vehicle for reading, but to give students the opportunity to develop the real knowledge and background of experiences that they need for their introductory college work. Students who believe that they are reading something important to them will work to develop the reading and writing abilities necessary for the acquisition of this knowledge.

Texts that are not bits and pieces but full books, articles,and stories that are related to one another and to the students become functional--or worth reading--to the students. Students begin to have real questions rather than ones imposed upon them and really work at understanding the text.

The goals of the curriculum of the reading classroom should consist of a tripartite interaction of students' personal growth (their interests, needs, and concerns), the acquisition of knowledge (cultural heritage), and the development of reading abilities. Thus, the curriculum is functional because the students needs are being met from three different perspectives. (See Figure 1.)

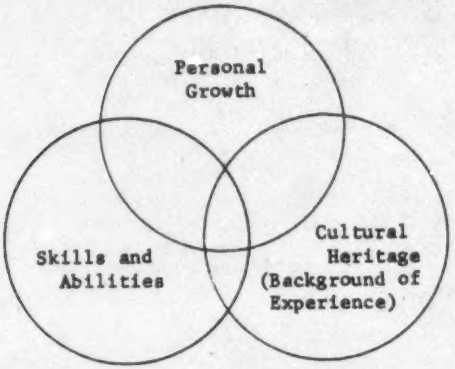
Second, Shuy states that the curriculum must provide for interactiveness. Talk in the classroom should, in fact, reach resolution through elaborated conversations among students and teachers.

In the reading classroom, this tells us that students must be allowed to respond to texts, individually, and in small and large groups. The in-

structor's role must be that of a facilitator bringing the student through varying transactions to a fuller understanding of the text and its relationship to other experiences, both real and vicarious. The teacher helps students go from the translation to analysis, synthesis, and evaluative thinking, but allows students real interaction.

The third principle expounded by Shuy is self-generation. Students should be able to set the directions for their own learning. For example, the reading instructor very often assigns research work; this can be expanded to allow students to pursue knowledge that is interesting and important to them. It should be carried a step further so that students become responsible for conveying that knowledge to their peers and to the teacher in seminar form--providing readings, questions, and discussions so that both sides of teaching/learning processes are experienced.

Figure 1
Three Part Curricula Model[1]



Roger Shuy's insights come from the field of linguistics. Thus, his assumptions are based on the ideas that reading and writing are acquired in much the same way that speaking and listening abilities are. In fact, reading involves the same levels that oral language does: phonological, morphological, lexical, syntactic, discourse, semantic, and pragmatic. Curricula that will facilitate growth in reading, as in any other language mode, must take into account the complex language abilities of college readers as well as their interests, needs, and concerns. Thus, students will read real texts for real purposes in real situations.

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[1] Harold A. Vine, Jr., "The Dartmouth Conference," New York University School of Education, Health, Nursing, and Arts Professions, Dec. 1970.

READING: THEORY AND PRACTICE AT CUNY

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Not every theory of reading will be mirrored in classroom practice, nor will every classroom practice find justification in a theoretical base. Nonetheless, the points of congruence between current theories of the reading process and current instructional methods at CUNY can be demonstrated by comparing the theoretical stances of the seminar leaders to the materials developed by CUNY faculty during 1981-82. These materials included A College Reading Curriculum Model and accompanying sample syllabi produced by the Consultant Committee of the CUNY Task Force on Reading.[1] These documents stand midway between theory and practice, on the one hand indicating ways in which reading is taught at CUNY and, on the other, reflecting a theoretical bias. I will draw from them to illustrate ways in which CUNY methods, materials, and practices concur with the speakers' theories.

Of the reading stages Jeanne Chall described at the seminar, it is the last three that must concern us most because, more than just elucidating the reading process, they actually match the utility of reading to ascending levels of intellectual development. In Stage 3, for the first time, we "read to learn," rather than to confirm what we already know; in Stage 4, shaken from egocentricity, we begin to read to adjust to an intellectually diverse universe. In Stage 5 (and here Chall acknowledges her debt to the work of William Perry), we read to constantly resynthesize an overriding global view. In short, Stages 3 and 4 reflect the mental worlds of the beginning college students we teach, the distinctions between the stages offering a description of remedial and prepared college readers, while Stage 5 sets the goal (more often than not, the ideal) we would like them to attain and implies continued development in content area courses throughout college.

The thematically integrated syllabus called "The Work Experience in Today's Society" is the only one of the four sample syllabi distributed throughout CUNY last year designed for a first-level college reading course. If we study it in light of Chall's model, we discover that it first immerses students in the hard work of "decentering," a Stage 3 trait that leads to the diversity of Stage 4. Beginning with their personal work experience, students move on to the multiple views of Studs Terkel's Working, constantly defining factually what people do and describing how people feel about--that is, interpret--what they do, singly and comparatively, and always relating the experience of others to themselves. Yet

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[1] Lorell Guydon, et al. A College Reading Curriculum Model (New York: Instructional Resource Center, The City University of New York, April 1982), unpublished manuscript. Subsequent references to this document will appear in parentheses.

the distinction between one's self and others is reinforced by the roles of first-person narrator and second-person recorder in the interview situation, exemplified by Working and practiced by students in the interviews they are assigned. Stage 4 work continues as the teacher prods her students from concrete experience to abstract issues and concepts. First, they isolate the themes inherent in the experiences of those they've interviewed and read about. The process is then reversed as they read articles that concentrate on those themes and use experience as concrete example, illustration, and evidence. Throughout the term, students consolidate their thoughts and feelings about work through writing.

Anthony Petrosky focused on research on assessment, most prominently data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) study Reading, Thinking and Writing.[2] The seventeen-year-olds tested were able to answer literal level multiple-choice questions with great ease, but were unable to explain in writing the reasons for their selections. They also had great difficulty writing about the items they had read. Petrosky maintained that these findings had implications for curriculum. Arguing that only writing reveals levels of reading competence beyond literal comprehension, he called on teachers to design reading curricula and tests with frequent writing tasks requiring students to recall, compare, classify, infer from, and evaluate what they read.

The introduction to the goals section of A College Reading Curriculum Model concurs with Petrosky, but places more emphasis on language domains other than writing:

> Through reading, speaking, listening and writing students should be able to comprehend and think critically about a broad spectrum of fiction and non-fiction works. These abilities are divided into the following levels: translation, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. These levels can be applied to fiction, non-fiction and textbooks and are meant to be hierarchical with the reader proceeding up and down the abstraction ladder (p. 20).

One of the sample syllabi, "Human Development," stresses integrating reading with writing, speaking, and listening. Students are guided through a series of texts so that they can ultimately select a topic and appropriate readings for class presentation. They are encouraged as both "teachers" and "students" to prepare questions, summarize, and respond to the topics presented. Afterwards, students revise and expand their presentations into papers.

Roger Shuy contributed a discussion of natural language functions to the seminars. He emphasized the curricular uses of extended discourse ranging from short articles to entire books. This emphasis also informs the Curriculum Model:

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[2] A. Applebee, et al. Reading, Thinking and Writing: Results from the 1979-80 National Assessment of Reading and Literature (Denver: National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1981).

> Reading as a language process is best learned in natural, whole-language situations. Any focus on word parts must be accomplished within the context of whole-language instruction. Reading instruction should initially be closely tied to what students are familiar with and progress to the more abstract. Initial reading/language activities ought to establish a firm context by being connected to one another via concepts, vocabulary, and point of view before disconnected or contrary views are examined. The type of reading skill we are advocating can best be achieved through experience and preparation via instructional programs that stress the interdependence of reading, writing, listening, and observing skills and the content of all disciplines (p. 19).

The Curriculum Model further recommends that materials be sequenced, "from the concrete to the abstract, from the narrative to the expository, from the personally relevant to the academically generalized, and from the linguistically simple to the linguistically complex" (pp. 28-29).

Shuy's concerns are also exemplified in two of the sample syllabi. In "Reading Is," students begin by examining their own attitudes toward reading. They then proceed to read a variety of texts to broaden their understanding, as well as to increase the complexity of their ideas. In "Focus on Language: how language can be manipulated in order to influence our thoughts," students begin with understanding their own language and then analyze language in the world around them, their readings coming from many sources.

Clearly, CUNY reading instructors, whether through professional experience or study, are designing curricula consistent with current theory. Yet there is no definite theory or research that points to any one method which will always be successful with all students. Certainly, the greatest strength of CUNY reading educators is their professional willingness to explore new theories and to try new strategies in an effort to help their students succeed in college.

THE CASE FOR THEMES IN A COLLEGE READING COURSE

Ira Epstein and Ernest Nieratka

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The purpose of this paper is to build a case for themes as a useful and versatile instructional framework in a college reading course. While much has been written about the competencies and skills students should demonstrate as a result of having taken a college reading course, little advice is provided to practitioners regarding how a reading course can be effectively organized. We plan to show that using themes to organize a reading course presents many advantages.

During the last decade, educators have been increasingly reminded of the important role that background knowledge plays in comprehending text. One problem that we and fellow colleagues have found repeatedly is that our students lack a frame of reference and knowledge of many important terms and concepts. How can we expect students to succeed in their college work if fundamental concepts and ideas such as "revolution," "alienation," and "power" are not familiar? How are students to make sense out of terms such as "Protestant work ethic" or "Puritan ideology" when they bring limited background knowledge to the printed page? To state the matter more succinctly, how can learners assess what they do not possess?

We maintain that one effective way of building, developing and expanding student knowledge in a reading course is by arranging a curriculum according to themes. Why themes? Using a thematic approach, an instructor can systematically present a body of knowledge, develop a core of ideas and concepts, and tie together many understandings. Moreover, since many content courses make use of themes, this approach in a reading course helps prepare a student for what lies ahead.

Because a theme is comprised of various related readings as opposed to isolated articles, new ideas can be presented to students in a sustained fashion. As their knowledge base increases, students can see how ideas are related to one another and can be synthesized. They can begin to understand that knowledge does not cease with one article or idea but rather can be developed, extended and refined as a result of considering several related sources of information. Proceeding in this manner, it is possible to introduce material which continues to become more difficult because students are better able to anticipate meaning based on the knowledge they have accumulated from their prior work. Such an understanding is difficult to acquire if students are presented with isolated readings and randomly sequenced exercises.

Additionally, other language arts components can be effectively integrated into a thematic course. New information can be presented through readings, lectures, and films. Students individually or in small groups

can be asked to respond orally or in writing. Furthermore students can be exposed to various writing styles through a combination of textbook chapters, short stories, magazine articles, cartoons, songs and poems. Non-print media such as video tapes, films and records can be used to further develop students' ideas.

Another advantage of using themes is that students can be held accountable for mastering a body of content and then tested to see if they have reached a level of proficiency. A variety of testing strategies such as essay and short answer questions can be effectively employed within the framework of a theme. This, of course, is exactly what students can expect to encounter when they reach their traditional subject area courses.

The thematic approach is flexible in that it can be extended further to build a reading course on a series of themes which are interconnected. This thematic coupling can enable students to see how ideas and concepts overlap, support, and contradict each other in different areas of knowledge. Thus, after students have established an information base about one area, they can begin to relate knowledge to other fields. For example, if students explored the theme of reading, the concepts of literacy and competency could be developed. Then, if students were to study the theme of working/careers, these concepts could be reintroduced within the context of job-related literacy and the competent worker.

Another further advantage of a thematic approach is that it can accommodate advocates of a skills hierarchy approach as well as those who maintain a psycholinguistic orientation. It offers skills practitioners an opportunity to relate key skills in the context of a theme so that students can see a practical application of the strategies to a cohesive body of knowledge. For those favoring a psycholinguistic approach, it allows students, as they read related materials, an opportunity to anticipate meaning, make predictions and confirm expectations.

Themes, then, are a useful educational framework for college reading courses in that they nearly simulate the content demands of college courses, allow the application of strategies to actual content, develop needed concepts and background, and accommodate practitioners whether they adhere to the psycholinguistic or the skills hierarchy model.

MY RESPONSE

Morton L. Fuhr

Kingsborough Community College

My professional life has spanned a quarter of a century. During that time I have seen countless theories of education and, in particular, reading theory courted by the public and popularized by my colleagues. I have lived with the eduational theory of John Dewey, the popularity of Jean Piaget, the spirit of John Gardner's "self-renewal," the challenge of Bruno Bettleheim and the idealism of John Holt. I have been told why Johnny can't read and watched the emergence of new reading systems such as Open Court, Macmillan, Ginn & Company. I have heard about the success of WEDGE and read about the pioneering reading and writing programs current all across America. And most recently I have been intellectually stimulated and encouraged by the work of three such important theorists and practitioners as Jeanne S. Chall, Anthony R. Petrosky and Roger W. Shuy.

In my own classroom I have blended all the ideas and theories, both past and present. What good teacher doesn't use any method, every method, conventional or unconventional, to capture and open, and illuminate the student's mind! Who hasn't used phonics, whole word, "Let's write a story," the personal diary, and every other approach to reading and writing expertise! And yet something is still wrong in the state of the profession!

I sit with my colleagues at department meetings, and I share ideas and teaching theory with members of the various reading and writing remediation committees on which I serve. All our professional expertise is joined into creating a sound learning environment at Kingsborough Community College. Yet students who come to us after 12 years of Open Court or Macmillan or Great Books or WEDGE or the phonics approach or the whole word technique still lack "college reading" skills.

We at CUNY have opened our doors through open admissions and have guaranteed every high school graduate an opportunity to attend college. Additionally we have provided remediation in reading and writing, as needed, to help underprepared students to reach grade level and to succeed in college. And still we have only partially succeeded.

Our students, at least those we see at Kingsborough, are for the most part, culturally deprived. They are T.V., video cartridge, and "Walkman" oriented. They have been exposed to the ideas of western civilization (surely their grade school teachers followed the curriculum), but they have not developed the fundamental curiosity nor been taught how to bridge the gap of understanding among the various disciplines.

The task that confronts my colleagues in the content areas as well as reading specialists is enormous. We must start with the fundamental con-

cepts of the content area, help the student to develop, by stages, an understanding of the concept and, then, only when the concept is understood, help the student to see the relationship between the concept taught and concepts from other disciplines. For example, the concept of group dynamics is taught in an introductory sociology course, and the psychology of group behavior is taught in an introductory psychology class, while the rise to power of Hitler is taught in a 20th century history course. The teacher of reading can show the student how to understand the main ideas, how to make inferences based on the reading and how to draw conclusions from what is read. However, it is the content area teacher who must draw on the newly acquired skill, and show the student the intellectual joy involved in relating what is learned in one content area to the broader spectrum of interdisciplinary knowledge and understanding.

Each teacher must take the time to help the student see how the understanding of one idea from one content area enables the reader/thinker to build a far more insightful comprehension by recognizing what he has learned in one course and how it relates to other courses and how it helps him to develop new insights.

The teachers of reading and writing cannot do this job alone, nor would the content area teachers want us to do so. What we must do, then, is begin to share with our colleagues the techniques and skills we teach our students and help our colleagues apply these skills to their content areas. Only then will the academic community face its mission.

"STUDY PSYCH!": A SERIES OF LEARNING SKILLS WORKSHOPS FOR STUDENTS IN AN INTRODUCTORY PSYCHOLOGY COURSE

Beth Pacheco

New York City Technical College

At the reading seminars, Roger Shuy emphasized that reading should occur in contexts, that, in fact, reading activities must be motivated by students' "purposeful explorations of a subject area." Too often we find reading programs teaching isolated skills without appropriate contexts or motivations.

New York City Technical College offered a series of study skills workshops for self-selected students enrolled in the entry-level psychology course. "Study Psych!" was an interdisciplinary effort of the Department of Developmental Skills and the Department of Social Sciences. Dr. Elizabeth Kloner of the Department of Social Sciences served as resource person; I designed and conducted the workshops. "Study Psych!" was a project that can serve as a model of providing a subject area context to motivate students to learn much needed skills.

This paper will discuss various aspects of the project including its initiation, objectives, logistics, scope, some specific workshop activities and finally, the general influence on both developmental and credit level instruction.

Our focus at New York City Technical College is indeed on technology; our students, for the most part, have very specific career goals. In addition to their major courses, students in all curricula must take social sciences as part of the liberal arts component of their degree requirements. Psychology is apparently the most popular course offering among the social sciences.

The Developmental Reading Unit of the Department of Developmental Skills offers a two-level reading sequence with a third-level class in Professional Learning Skills for students in specific Allied Health curricula. Our Reading Laboratory provides supplemental individualized and small-group instruction for students in Developmental Reading classes; we do not offer tutoring in specific subject areas.

Although we are not a tutorial service, the reading faculty does provide a program of study skills workshops open to all students at the college during the weekly student activity hour. Furthermore, when funds are available, interested reading faculty are assigned to work collaboratively with faculty from other departments on workshops and seminars similar to "Study Psych!" We have done interdisciplinary projects of this nature with the Departments of Radiologic Technology, Hotel and Restaurant Technology and Accountancy. The impetus for such projects comes from three sources: concerned faculty, concerned students, and concerned administrators. In the case of "Study Psych!" it came from the students.

In the Spring semester of 1981 we conducted an informal survey of the numerous students who were requesting assistance with the entry-level psychology course. We concluded that there were specific problem areas that went beyond the anticipated lack of familiarity with an abstract technical vocabulary. The students assessed their own weaknesses: "...can't take notes; don't know what to write down." "...too much reading; don't know what to underscore." "...can't hear everything." "She talks too fast." "...always unprepared for tests; too much to learn."

As classes were beginning in the Fall semester, we received funding and the approval of both departments to set up a series of study skills workshops. All else became the responsibility of the skills instructor--identifying and attracting students (to a non-credit generating commitment), scheduling hours, locating rooms and developing the content for the workshops.

It was not my intention to integrate the workshops and classroom instruction. It was my intention to use specific lectures and textbook assignments as a basis for instructing studying techniques. Dr. Kloner, who taught a "massed lecture" composed of three sections, and I agreed that I would attend the first three lectures--my notes would serve as a basis for the workshops on lecture note-taking. We also identified three text chapters that would provide content for text note-taking and test preparation workshops. We originally scheduled six weeks of workshops, two sections per week, each for a different group. At midterm the demand was such that I added a third section and extended the project for an additional three weeks. Attendance grew from twenty students in the first week to sixty students in the final week of the project.

The workshops encompassed the following topics and activities:

- Sharing insights: examining the text;
- Taking lecture notes: focus on listening;
- Taking lecture notes: focus on applying concepts;
- Underscoring and Annotating: a system;
- Preparing for exams: overviewing; study-frames for synthesizing information; the index card system for synthesizing information and committing it to memory;
- Test-taking techniques (analyzing short answer tests);
- The research paper: documentation;
- Interpreting the essay question: assessing possible sources;
- Collaborative critiquing of rough drafts.

The overall objective of the workshops was to assist students to become self-directed and efficient learners. To that end I structured each session to include collaborative problem-solving tasks which required little intervention or participation on the part of the instructor. For example, in the first workshop students were asked to independently describe aspects of the course and then to share their perceptions. The disparate responses to the following questions were astounding and enlightening.

1. What kinds of student behavior does your instructor encourage?

   Check ( ) those that apply

   _____questioning
   _____listening
   _____note-taking
   _____memorizing material
   _____private consultation with instructor
   _____participation in class
   _____independent work
   _____thorough and extensive reading

Organization:

2. Which of the following have you received?

   course outline_____ list of assignments_____
   course overview_____ syllabus_____

   How thoroughly do you think you will be able to cover the material?

   _____

   How much time will you devote to this course each week?

   _____

Examinations:

3. What kinds of tests will you have?

   _____

   How often will you be tested?

   _____

   With whom can you review course material?

   _____

The fact that the questions produced a wide variety of responses tells us something interesting about students' perceptions of a course and their ability to perform in it. It certainly points up the need they have for organization, study, reading and writing skills.

In the workshop on listening, I pointed out that my own analysis of the instructor's lectures revealed that she often posed questions and then proceeded to answer those questions with lengthy lists of key concepts, each of which she developed with explanations and illustrations. Typical of these questions are: What makes man unique? When we respond psycholog-

ically, is it physiological coupled with learned behavior? How do we get information?**

To emphasize the need to listen carefully and to give practice in listening and noting sustained complex and abstract utterances, I used a collaborative learning technique. The students organized into small groups. I assigned each group a question by "pooling" their notes. When a consensus was reached, one individual from each group lectured to the other three, first by asking the question and then reciting his/her group's response. Students in the remaining groups listened and took notes.

For a workshop on test preparation, I designed a partially completed study-frame which summarized the major schools of psychology, their representative theories and outstanding theoreticians. The workshop task was to complete the study-frame by working in groups, using information from lectures and textbook notes. In the following session, the students prepared study-frames which they then exchanged with each other for refinement and completion. An example of a study-frame designed by a student group in a "Study Psych!" workshop is shown in Figure 1.

Because the course final examination, a take-home essay test, required extensive outside reading, the final workshops were devoted to research, reading and writing techniques. The Department of Social Sciences provided us with a small "library" of books and journals so that students could have the experience of compiling "mock" reference lists and citing those references in practice narratives. Other workshop tasks included studying model bibliographic formats and then rewriting and reorganizing incorrect lists of references. Much time was devoted to the analysis of essay questions and to developing note-outlines in preparation for writing essays.

The last workshop session was a peer evaluation of rough drafts for the very rigorous final which consisted of three questions. My intention was to provide the students with general guidance for editing, revising and rethinking written work to insure its completeness and to improve its clarity. I designed a peer evaluation form which focused on key aspects of each of the three questions. The form which was also to be used for self-assessment included the following items:

- Has the writer provided sufficient summary of original material so that a reader unfamiliar with that material can understand it? If not, write "S" in the margin where more complete or clearer summarizing is needed.

- Is the use of scientific terminology accurate? Are hypothesis, procedure, subject, control and experimental groups, results and conclusions clearly and appropriately labeled? If not, record the missing or mislabeled categories here:_____

- Is the writer's theory clearly stated? If not, write "T" in the margin; if so, quote the sentence or sentences which express the theory here:_____

Two years have passed since the "Study Psych!" workshop series was completed. A major benefit of the project was the exchange of information

for incorporation into both developmental and entry-level instruction. For example, the decisive factor at midterm for extending the workshops to the end of the semester was the psychology instructor's decision to refine the course and final examination by using a developmental approach which would enable students to acquire and demonstrate various levels of understanding of the course material: previewing their textbook assignments, devising study frames and "pooling" their notes and insights in preparation for classes and tests. Concurrently, a major component of the recently refined curriculum in Developmental Reading is study skills applied to entry-level college textbook reading.

Figure 1. Student-designed Study-Frame for Theories of Development

Study Skill: Synthesis of notes from text and lecture in preparation for tests.

Perspective:	Psychoanalytical	Behavioral	Cognitive Development
Major Figures			
What is the source of change?			
Human being's role in development?			
How does the developmental process occur? Name and define parts, stages, activities:			
Criticism? (strengths/weaknesses)			
Points of comparison/ contrast			

"Study Psych!" also served as an impetus for other departments to work with the Reading Unit on collaborative courses and workshops. Faculty are now designing a combined reading-health education credit-bearing course. In the near future we will be working once again with our colleagues in Social Sciences on workshops for students in recently approved courses in micro and macroeconomics. Thus, on several levels, reading faculty are endeavoring to share with colleagues throughout the college the need, as Roger Shuy has pointed out, to structure reading as "purposeful exploration of a subject area" which we too have come to regard as the "real context and motivation for learning."

CRITICAL THINKING: HOW I FOUND THE MISSING LINK

Frank E. Brown

Medgar Evers College

Only in recent years have the National Institute of Education and other such agencies come to recognize the need for critical thinking as a classroom subject unto itself and to realize that critical thinking underlies the "basic skills." I submit that it is the basic skill, for it links school subject matter and daily life.

My own quest for what was then the missing link began many years ago when I started teaching at Thomas Knowlton Junior High School in the South Bronx. There I came to see how poorly matched school materials were to the lives of the children I was teaching. From the beginning, I, like many of my conscientious colleagues, used question techniques to stimulate class discussion about reading selections. I soon found, however, that my students resisted, in some cases even resented, the course material. They just did not like the traditional textbooks being used. The stories in them were fine, but too often they did not lend themselves to the world my students knew. One evening as I jotted wearily in my journal, it occurred to me that some of what I had written about my students--especially their lively, colorful conversations in the local candy store--would make for short stories that reflected the world as they knew it. The first "short story" I wrote was "New School;" I knew it would have special meaning for them because as seventh-graders, they were new to Thomas Knowlton. The context for my questions was now immediately and undeniably recognizable to them. My line of questioning revolved around their fears--real and imagined--in coming to a new school: What were their fears? Were they justified? Why so? Why not? The discussion that followed the reading of that story and others like it was unbelievably lively. What's more, my students' scores on objective reading tests improved markedly.

I had taken a tentative step toward critical thinking by adapting material to a vision of reality my students understood, but lively discussion in itself did not guarantee analysis of the stories, nor did it necessarily establish vital connections between other kinds of reading and my students' lives. What about stories that presented other visions of reality? Most of all, I needed to broaden my approach to include more than only asking questions incidental to a literary piece.

When I arrived at the Division of Special Programs of Medgar Evers College in Fall 1972, I found counselors and students engaging in a structured process that seemed to provide students with a cognitive approach to their problems. Originally developed by Paul Mattox, it encouraged students to think through a situation by means of a sequence of mental acts: observation, conceptualization, analysis, evaluation, decision, and action. I adapted the system to my reading and writing classes. Working

from the assumption that every short story and essay elucidates a basic issue, I now centered my reading instruction in problem identification and solution.

This meant revamping my line of questioning. Rather than asking students to answer questions only after they finished reading a piece, I now introduced questions at crucial points in their reading. For example, after they had read the first few paragraphs of a short story, I would ask them to identify who the story was about and the problem the character faced. As they read further, I would ask them to analyze and evaluate the character and the character's behavior. Whenever possible, just before the students read about the character's decision to act, I would ask them to put themselves in the character's place and to imagine what they would do in a similar situation. They would then set aside their solutions for a moment while they read the character's decision and its results; later they would compare and assess the two versions.

While the techniques I applied to the problem-solution approach to reading certainly brought literary and self inquiry into better balance then my former method, I soon found that I was stimulating only a narrow range of thinking skills in my students. At the same time, I realized that I now had to teach thinking itself as the single source informing both my students' reading and the inquiry into their own lives. To do that, I wanted a structured program that would generate, with some rigor, the gamut of critical thinking skills my students needed.

At this point in the mid-70's, I discovered Matthew Lipman's Philosophy for Children, a program that transposes the college-level discipline into a learning sequence for elementary and high school students.[1] It teaches the philosophical tradition and its concepts experientially. Students learn what philosophers do by identifying and practicing the separate skills that make for sound reasoning. The program also endeavors to integrate these skills with existing curricula, in its broadest sense attempting to infuse moral education into students' reading, writing, and learning in many disciplines. Lipman believes that because philosophical concepts are inherently contestable, students at all levels find them fascinating and welcome the constant challenge to respond vigorously with counter-reasons, counter-examples, and alternative thinking strategies. I was immediately drawn by the program's seriousness, discipline, and logical rigor.

Over the past several years, I have incorporated parts of the Philosophy program into my college reading and writing courses. I have had particular success with Mark, a short novel written by Lipman that is accompanied by a teacher's manual called Social Inquiry. The plot revolves around Mark, a high school sophomore who is accused of vandalism. However, Lipman has endowed Mark with recognizable traits that stand as cues in arguing for his innocence or guilt. The following fragment from a

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[1] The program has been developed through the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children, Monclair State College, Montclair, NJ. Interested teachers should consult Lipman and Sharp, Philosophy in the Classroom, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980).

discussion that came after a class had read the first chapter of Mark hints at the ways I now challenge students to provide reasons for their answers:

Instructor: "What do you know about Mark Johorski?"
Student A: "He's a high school student...a basketball player."
Instructor: "What else do you know about him?"
Student A: "He likes to help people."
Instructor: "How do you know?"
Student A: "He tried to stop two kids from fighting."
Instructor: "How? What did he ask them? 'Who started the fight?'"
Student B: "No. He asked them, 'What are you fighting about?'"
Instructor: "Isn't the question 'Who started the fight' a better question?"
Student C: "No."
Instructor: "Why?"
Student D: "He wants to offer a solution."

Rather than my fixing "problem-solution" as the context of inquiry, my students have identified Mark's choice for themselves and immediately see that his choice indicates his character. They inherently understand that different questions have different motives and generate different modes of thought. From beginnings such as these, students easily move beyond the concrete circumstances of plot to more abstract levels of inquiry and reasoning--to considerations of character, thought processes, and to the important social issues the story is designed to raise: the function of the law, the nature of bureaucracy, the role of crime in contemporary society, the freedom of the individual, and alternative concepts of justice. Needless to say, this procedure encompasses recursive analysis and synthesis, the skills so necessary to academic, professional, and personal success.

While Philosophy for Children has not been a panacea, it has helped me bridge the gap between reading and self-knowledge in the classroom by placing critical thinking at the center of my teaching.

WHAT DOES THE TEST TEST?

Ellen Block

Baruch College

The reading seminars presented by the Instructional Resource Center last June provided representatives from each unit of CUNY with an opportunity to discuss aspects of the reading process, the development of reading ability, and assessment with three well known educators and with each other. The result was a stimulating and refreshing end to the academic year of 1981-82.

Much of the discussion during the seminars centered around two issues: the assessment of reading ability, in particular, the present reading competency test and the appropriateness and effectiveness of skills-oriented versus thematically-centered approaches to curriculum. Jeanne S. Chall and Anthony R. Petrosky presented two very different views of the uses of testing in an educational program. For Petrosky, the test mirrors the curriculum, encourages educators to look at the implications of their decisions, and allows them to influence the direction of classroom instruction. For Chall, tests should also be informative, but this information is directed at teachers. Therefore, tests should be chosen so that they provide teachers with a clear picture of their students' needs and strengths. Both of these views acknowledge the interdependence of testing and curriculum. For both, appropriate testing proceeds from a clear notion of curricular goals. This is true whether the purpose of the testing is to assess competency or to designate placement.

If agreement about curriculum must precede discussing testing, there would be little hope of ever discussing reading assessment. The CUNY faculty present agreed to disagree about the main issue involving curriculum: the question of whether reading is best taught by being broken down into discrete skills or by a more holistic approach. This philosophical debate has divided reading practitioners for many years. It was with a sigh of disappointment and a resigned shrug that I listened to those old irreconcilable arguments.

I was encouraged by what seemed to be some basic agreement about the reading competency test. Some participants felt that there are deficiencies in the present test but that, due to political and fiscal exigencies, it was an acceptable screening device. According to this view, the Descriptive Test of Language Skills, the competency test, is adequate for separating able college readers from those less able, but it is limited in its ability to measure student progress in reading programs or the overall effectiveness of programs because it does not test the type of work covered in many reading courses. Some felt, therefore, that it should not be used as an exit criterion from reading programs because it may not reflect the work required of college students.

The solution proposed by some of the seminar participants was to develop additional tests, which would more closely and more clearly reflect the work of reading classes and the tasks facing college students in their content classes--assuming the two are similar. This test might ask students to read a passage, take notes on it, study the notes, write a summary of the ideas presented, and finally write an essay about the passage. Such a test would be given to students after they were placed in reading programs and then at the end of a course or the program. The contention was that while there may not be agreement about how to get "there," there can be agreement about where we are going. That is, reading teachers may not be able to agree about the reading process, but they may be able to agree on the final product. This appears to be the attitude taken by many writing teachers with respect to the writing assessment test.

I am basically in favor of this type of test. At the same time, I am disturbed by the certainty with which the views on the DTLS were stated at the seminars when there seems to be little more than impressionistic evidence to support these views. If reading instructors are to maintain credibility as professionals, we need to base our judgments on more than impressions. To the best of my knowledge, no one knows how well performance on the DTLS correlates with taking notes or writing summaries. Individual teachers may be able to say that there were X number of students in their classes last term who wrote a good essay for them but who did not pass the DTLS. Individual teachers may not know how many students who cannot write a good summary pass the DTLS or how their perceptions compare with performance throughout the University.

I believe that the degree of disparity between the tasks involved in the DTLS and the tasks involved in the class is not logically defensible. The tasks on the test--answering many multiple-choice questions in a short amount of time--set up expectations about what will be taught in a reading class. From my experience, students have quite a bit of trouble understanding or accepting that one type of reading admits them into a program, but that the program is designed to help them with another type of reading.

A review of the questions surrounding these assertions reveal some of the complexities involved. My perception is that most people at the seminars agreed that the DTLS is an adequate screening device. How do we know this is true? I would like to know how many people are placed in reading classes because they read slowly, not because they read poorly? I would also like to know if this test gives an accurate indication of the reading ability of second language readers. It is, after all, a power test in which time is a crucial variable. Many of the passages include allusions to specific regional and/or cultural knowledge. For example, in one passage, the reader must be able to associate Bergen County or Trenton with New Jersey to be able to easily answer the questions. Other passages refer to names and places in American history or require awareness of which words are typically English words. Most of the information can be inferred from the passage, but my experience teaching ESL students leads me to believe that this process takes time and means that the non-native reader must puzzle out what is a simple association for the native reader. Does such specific cultural information have any relation to what is re-

quired of the college reader--unless, perhaps, he is reading an American short story?

I do not know who is screened in or out of reading classes or if we are missing some people or taking too many people from a particular ethnic or language background due to the nature of the test. In at least one unit of the University, 99+% of the people in its reading program come from homes in which a language other than English or a non-mainstream dialect is spoken. Is this the result of the nature of the population entering that particular college or the result of the type of test given?

I agree with those seminar participants who said that the DTLS does not present the student with a realistic college task. On this test, a person must read many short passages (14 or 15 depending on the form) and answer 40 or 45 questions in only 30 minutes. The college student, on the other hand, must read extended prose, and usually operates without immediate time pressure. In spite of this, some seminar participants claimed that performance on the DTLS correlates with performance in college reading courses. I do not know, for example, how performance on this test correlates with performance in other college courses. Is there evidence to support this claim? Or do scores on the DTLS correlate rather with grades in courses that require reading and writing? I also believe we should find out if the DTLS correlates with the ability to read extended prose, and with reading performed under untimed conditions.

I should confess that I am not a "neutral" in the debate about appropriate testing. My personal observations make me believe that the test does not really reflect student ability or lack of ability. It neither reflects curriculum as Petrosky suggests nor provides information to classroom teachers as Chall suggests. However, it is possible that the test does correlate highly with classroom behavior and that it does really make valid decisions about screening. I do not have the information to make a final, intelligent, informed decision about testing, and I think we owe ourselves and our students the benefit of an informed decision. I am suggesting that the Reading Task Force or a group of instructors designated by the Task Force continue to study the DTLS. It will take time, but the time is worth it. It has been said that the journey of a thousand miles begins with one step. We owe ourselves and our students that step. They are attempting a long journey themselves.

THE CUNY READING SEMINARS: A LOOK AROUND, A LOOK AHEAD

Dolores Y. Straker

York College

The discussions and responses that grew out of the first three seminars were stimulating, provocative, challenging, and, most of all, encouraging for they afforded CUNY reading faculty an opportunity to examine together our reading practices and to focus on future directions we may want to take. The seminars led most of us to recognize that there are no easy answers to the issues we face at CUNY regarding reading instruction and assessment. As with any process of inquiry, the research questions we want to ask can only be answered by a slow process of investigation and development that we, the CUNY reading faculty, can best undertake.

While we may not agree on a definition of reading or how it might best be taught, there certainly are areas of agreement among CUNY faculty. We should feel encouraged by the progress that we have made thus far in our teaching of reading and by the attention we give to the reading needs of our students through the Chancellor's Task Force on Reading of the Freshman Skills Assessment Program and the CUNY Association of Reading Educators (CARE). We should feel encouraged by the recently developed reading curriculum model and the experience of these reading seminars. Finally, we should feel encouraged by the level of agreement among CUNY faculty with one another and with our invited seminar leaders on approaches to research in, assessment of, and teaching of reading. Bell's article, extending Shuy's approach to language learning and use to the curriculum of the college reading course, suggests one domain from which research questions about the reading process might be drawn. Block's article focuses on the alignment of curriculum with assessment, another domain. The articles by Brown, Epstein/Nieratka, Cash, Pacheco, and Fuhr all speak to approaches to teaching college-level reading that are not only compatible with one another, but with the philosophy of the recently developed CUNY reading curriculum model.

The model defines reading as a cognitive, linguistic, developmental process that is best taught through the use of extended, contextually-based text. This notion of reading is reflected in the Brown article in his concern that students develop critical thinking skills. Epstein/Nieratka, Pacheco, and Fuhr all agree that reading cannot be taught effectively as an isolated activity but must be applied to the contexts in which it will be used either through the use of a theme-centered approach in the reading classes or by making reading as much the responsibility of content course faculty as of reading faculty. Cash points up the areas of compatibility among current reading practice in CUNY, the philosophy of the curriculum model, and the notions advanced by the three seminar leaders.

Thus, when we look around, we see that many of us share similar approaches to teaching reading, and these approaches reflect the current thinking in the field. We have been and continue to be concerned about our practices and now question the directions we must take in the future. What, then, are the major issues to be investigated in regard to assessment, reading processes, and curricular practices?

- How, in light of the recently developed curriculum model, might we attain a closer alignment of assessment with curriculum?

- How, as a University, might we explore and develop means for assessing CUNY students beyond the level of minimum competency?

- What do we know, what do we want to know, and what do we need to know about the mature reading process?

- How might this knowledge modify our current teaching practices?

- How will information about the reading process and teaching practices further influence our assessment measures?

We must look ahead to examine the relevant areas of inquiry raised by these seminars: the developmental reading stages of college students, the interrelationships of the developmental stages of reading and writing, and the relationships of the reading process and college students' prior experiences. Then, we can apply our findings to materials and methods that will help CUNY students look ahead to successful college careers.

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